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PRIZE POEMS

☆ 1913 ☆ 1929 ☆

EDITED BY
CHARLES A WAGNER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
MARK VAN DOREN

1930
Charles Boni PAPER BOOKS *New York*

PRIZE POEMS
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INTRODUCTION

A person ignorant of the circumstances might give two wrong answers to the question whether such an anthology as this adequately represented the poetry of its period. He might say, for instance, that poems which had won the most prominent prizes offered in their day must be good poems; in which case he would be right enough. But he might go on to say that these must be the best poems; in which case he might, for reasons I will give later, be very wrong indeed. On the other hand this mythical and ignorant person might say with great certainty that these were bound to be bad poems simply because they were prize poems. I know people who talk like that; they give the impression that they would as soon be shot as win a poetry contest. And I have had at various times a degree of sympathy with their point of view. But it does not apply in the present instance—also for reasons which I will give later. This happens to be a very finely representative anthology; it finely represents, that is, the good poetry produced in the United States between the year 1913, when poetry in the United States began once more to be generally good, and the year 1929, or for practical purposes today, when we continue in an excellent and in-

teresting vein—though a different one from that which was struck around the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century.

Now to my reasons for saying that prize poems are not necessarily best poems. There are many reasons for this. One is simply that at a given moment the man or woman who is writing the best poem of that moment may not know of the existence of a contest. Or this poet may be too modest to enter it; or he may be too proud; or he may feel, not without justification, that the kind of poem he is writing may not be the kind which would impress the judges, or any group of persons who might conceivably judge him during his lifetime. He might seem for the moment to be a "queer" poet, one of those numerous poets in the history of literature who seemed "queer" at first, only to become classics as soon as the public, or a portion of the public, learned how to read them. This of course is the most serious argument against poetry prizes—or rather against the practice of taking them seriously. So much depends on who the judges are; and they are so likely to be the wrong people. Or even if they are the right people, there is such a good chance that when they begin to function as a committee or group they will cease to possess the virtues which they once had as individuals.

For four years I had something to do with conducting one of the contests represented in Mr. Wagner's collection, and although I naturally believe that the winning poems each year were good, indeed very good, yet I must admit that I saw in the deliberations of the committee a very real possibility of danger and error. It was this. There were, say, six persons on the committee. One of them had gone through the three or four thousand poems submitted in

the contest—yes, there are that many poets at least in the United States, and then you may multiply by ten—and had narrowed the candidates down to seven or eight. These were circulated among the members of the committee, who convened on a certain day, each with a first choice, a second choice, and a third choice. Now in the nature of things one's first choice was a poem which one had liked very much—had liked, perhaps, immediately and was prepared to defend with passion. But since something one likes in such a way is almost sure to be disliked with equal fervor by one's friends, it usually turned out that a fierce debate arose over the question which poem should stand first of all. And since a decision did have to be reached, and since the members did hate to surrender their favorites, a decision was reached in favor of some poem which had been second on almost everybody's ballot—a poem, in other words, which was pretty good, which had no harm in it, which disgusted no one, but which lacked the positive qualities supposedly desirable. The situation was frequently saved, as a matter of fact, by the circumstance that one or two members became outraged and argued for their choices until they got to be nuisances and until it was time for dinner. Then the rest gave in, and the decision had been reached—not by a committee, after all, but by a pair of dictators who perhaps, for better or for worse, should have had the handling of the business from the start. All of which has direct bearing upon the last point in the preceding paragraph. The best poem being written at a given moment may have qualities so positive that there could not easily be agreement as to the value of these qualities among even the best equipped of judges.

But now as to the reasons for my saying that in the

present case there is no cause for the reader to worry, or rather for my saying that he has reasons to congratulate himself. In the first place, most of the prizes here represented were bestowed not upon poems submitted in a specific contest but upon poems considered at the end of a year to have been the best poems printed in a certain magazine during that year. Thus there was no rush at a decision, and thus there had been a preliminary selection at the hands of editors; and there is the possibility, too, that in some instances the poet had submitted his poem without any thought of a prize at all, and almost certainly had not written it for that purpose. Poems written to win prizes are almost never any good, though of course they may be. In the second place, the judges were more than competent judges; they were persons with a very special interest in the art of poetry, and they happened to be editors of magazines—Poetry, The Dial, The Nation, *and in a more modest way* Contemporary Verse *and* Palms—*which had the confidence of good poets everywhere in America, and which drew into their pages the best specimens of the art, on the whole, that were being produced. And in the third place, this being the most important of the three, these judges were sympathetic with tendencies in the country toward a new conception of the possibilities and responsibilities of poetry. In other words, they welcomed "queerness," sometimes even to the point of indulging it unduly; or at any rate they encouraged those various adventures which have now come to seem hardly adventures at all, but justified expeditions, fully equipped, into the exciting new lands which always lie ahead of bold and original artists of any kind. The poetry printed in the present volume represents the boldest and*

most original work done in the United States during the past decade and a half; and, by way of corollary, the list of its authors is almost a list of the best modern American poets. Some important names are not here, as might be expected; but they are few, and so are the kinds of "new" American poetry which are not here. Mr. Wagner's collection, made, it might seem, on an arbitrary basis, turns out nevertheless to be one of the best collections I know.

It has, incidentally, the immense advantage over most contemporary anthologies that it contains many long poems, indeed specializes in long poems. The anthologist's vice is usually that he picks the little flowers along his way. This is well enough if his aim is only to tickle our fancy, or if the field he works in is a field of trivial flora. But when the available field is large and thickly grown with sizable trees, such an anthologist has missed his greatest opportunity. Our day is noteworthy among other things for the frequency with which the major note in poetry has been heard—the note of passion and energy and scope. It is an ambitious age in this as in other respects. Mr. Wagner, then, has done the age a decided service by representing it in the larger aspects of its rhythmical expression.

I have said so much thus far about the newness of this poetry, or of much of it, that I should next try to say precisely what I mean. It is no insult to the average reader of this book to suppose that a general explanation of its contents is in order. Not that any complete explanation could be forthcoming from anyone, since the causes of literary movements are as obscure as the causes of wars—a seemly comparison in view of the fact that a literary movement often has something militant about it. And certainly not

from me, who do not pretend to understand literary history entirely. But a few facts are plain, and they should be stated as plainly as possible for the benefit of those who find themselves a bit bewildered among modern poets. Poetry which is both new and good is also difficult to read. In a sense all good poetry is difficult to read, but we are not aware of the fact when we are considering the classics, which centuries of human experience have taught us how to read. In the case of our own contemporaries there is no one to teach us, and we often suspect either that the lesson would not be worth while or that it remains for our children and grandchildren to reap the reward of learning it. Certainly since 1910 or so the best American poetry has presented a formidable aspect, and it still does so for a great many readers.

A reader, then or now, who had been brought up on the poetry familiar to his parents, the household poetry, shall we say, of late nineteenth-century America, the poetry which millions of school children had memorized and politicians had quoted in their speeches, the poetry of Victorian England and of Victorian America, the poetry of Tennyson, Longfellow, and Swinburne (but chiefly of their innumerable and indistinguishable followers)—such a reader had every right to be bewildered a decade and a half ago. He frequently, indeed, resented the kind of poetry then coming upon the scene; or he refused to call it poetry at all. And no wonder. For the new poets were trying their best not to write like the poets he had known; they were getting as far away from the usual thing as paper and ink could take them. They had declared war upon the current conceptions of poetry.

They had not declared war upon good poetry as such,

though the public accused them of so doing. Rather, they were returning to the best traditions that ever obtained, and they were making a gesture of the sort that had often been made before. They were trying to write poetry, in a word, that was not "poetical." For as soon as poetry becomes "poetical" it is dead. As soon, that is, as the prevailing technique becomes easy, and the attitude toward poetry on the part of the public becomes fixed, and ideas of what is poetic become stale or dogmatic, there needs to be a revolution; and it will be started among those poets who remember that good poetry was always hard both to write and to read, and who have a passionate, exalted notion of the things which poetry at its best can do. They know that poetry at its best can be very exciting; they observe that the world is beginning to nod rather stupidly and comfortably over what passes as poetry; and they burst into protest, with the result that the product of their zeal is put down by indignant readers as—well, not poetry at all.

The new poetry did not seem to be poetry for several reasons. For one thing it looked like prose. And it was meant to look that way in a number of cases. This was because the rhythms already current had got too easy to master, and were being mastered by a mob of poetasters. They were distressingly regular and singsong—so much so that it had become almost impossible for a poet to say anything which did not fit into the scheme of these rhythms. Whereas there were new things to say, or so it seemed; there were ideas, moods, visions which appeared to call for new forms if they were ever to find expression. The old forms were not sufficient, being either too small altogether or else too vaguely large and hollow, like the

clothes of a long forgotten giant left rotting on the ground. Hence "free verse," wherein the rhythms obeyed no mechanical laws of meter, but obeyed instead the ins and outs and the ups and downs of the particular poet's feeling. An attempt was made—partly under the influence of experiments begun a generation ago in France, where poetry, like painting, breathed easily in an atmosphere of radicalism—to devise a perfectly pliable rhythmical instrument which, far from being lawless, should obey the strictest of all artistic laws, namely, that form in art should respect the subject matter. So "free verse." And so, too, much poetry that actually was prose. But the best of it was better for being free—subtler, more varied, more ambitious, more interesting.

Not that all of the new poetry was written in free verse. A rather surprisingly small proportion of it was, in fact. But even in those poets who used what seemed to be established forms—blank verse, the sonnet, rhymed quatrains, couplets—the tendency was to take freedoms with these forms, to stretch them beyond their apparent limits, to make them say unheard-of things, to make them, really, more difficult. And occasionally there was a poet who found himself condemned, or it might be praised, for working in vulgar rhythms—the rhythms of popular song and speech, syncopated in the same way that dance tunes were beginning to be syncopated. The charge against such a poet was that he was not dignified. But the new poets for the most part did not care a rap for dignity.

Poetry had been soft, both in its sound and in its sentiment. Now it became hard, with edges and structure, and with a bold, protruding skeleton of idea. The poet was no longer content to lull his listener; he would shock him,

wake him up, jolt him into attention; he would force him to use his mind as he read. Hence a diction which met with opposition because it was not "poetic diction"—the sort of language that had become customary in verse. Hence a complicated syntax, surprising combinations of words, and positively embarrassing riches of concrete, homely, sometimes "ugly" words alternating, it might be, with abstractions, technical terms, and far-fetched phrases. Hence a preoccupation on the part of some poets with the mysteries of the individual mind, a probing into the byways of emotion, conscious or subconscious. Hence also on the part of others an excursion into ideas that were radical in the same way that ethical and social ideas had been long becoming radical. Hence a commendable frankness about lawyers and politicians, the institution of marriage, the art of love, and the distribution of wealth; hence a generation of socialist poets, confessed or unconfessed. Hence, in general, a frankness of diction sometimes brutal, and sometimes, indeed, only temporarily effective. Hence too a concern with current American life: stockyards, steelmills, factory chimneys, foreign laborers, the landscape east and west, the folkway up and down. Hence, since America was ceasing to be an agricultural civilization and was becoming an industrial, urban one, an abandonment in many quarters of the pastoral pose, an acceptance of the city with all its new materials hitherto unattempted in poetry. Hence in this or that corner an abandonment by some poet of every subject except his own capricious, possibly distorted fancy; hence a series of refinements upon his own private processes, with reflections, perhaps, upon the secrets of his physiology no less than of his psychology. Hence, in a word, freedom. Freedom from the

necessity of being poetical. Freedom to explore at will that vast world which poetry had been bent upon excluding from itself, and which prose therefore was preempting as a matter of course. Freedom to say anything at all which seemed needful or desirable to say.

The renaissance thus sketched was of great value if only because it produced a generation of poets, and is now producing another, more numerous (and at the same time good) than any American generation had previously been. And certainly it produced a body of poetry which deserves attention. It deserves, indeed, a closer kind of attention than many persons are able or inclined to give it. Good poetry requires a discipline in the reader, and so does this. It cannot be read by a mind asleep. It is not simple, though sometimes it may seem so on the surface. It has the complexity of the mind at full stretch, and one of the reasons for reading it is that it reveals how many things are possible to the human soul. But perhaps a better reason is that it gives one of the amplest and acutest of all pleasures, the pleasure that there is in poetry itself. The present anthology is an excellent introduction to this experience.

Not many names of the first rank are missing from this list, including as it does the names of Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, "H. D.," Amy Lowell, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Elinor Wylie, T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, E. E. Cummings, William Carlos Williams, Lola Ridge, and Sara Teasdale. Not many of the movements within the movement, the schools within the renaissance, are missing either. And there is the additional fact that here, fortunately enough, is a rich sample of the work accomplished in

the publication of poetry by the original and most important poetry magazine of modern America. "Poetry," founded in 1912 at the beginning of the age under discussion, has had many followers, some of which are responsible for important items in the present collection; and there have been ups and downs in the fortunes of "Poetry" itself; but no account of the contemporary scene would be complete without a reference to the leadership assumed at the start by Miss Harriet Monroe and her fellow editors.

"Poetry" is published in Chicago, and it is natural to identify it with the Mid-Western poets who first collected around it. Its connections are much wider than that, but there is a convenient place to begin. Vachel Lindsay, for instance, who won prizes from the magazine in 1913 and 1915, won them with such famous and characteristic poems as "General William Booth Enters into Heaven" and "The Chinese Nightingale." These, with "The Congo," "The Santa Fe Trail," and other poems by Mr. Lindsay in syncopated rhythms, made a great deal of noise in their day and are still notable for the success which they achieve in the direction of vocalism. Mr. Lindsay broke with the mute tradition of the merely printed poem. A social visionary with reforms that he wanted to sing, he emphasized the rôle of the chanting voice, and wrote poems which indeed do not have their full effect until chanted aloud, preferably by Mr. Lindsay himself, who tours the country with them constantly. Then there was Carl Sandburg, who still is known by many readers as "The Chicago Poet" on the strength of "Chicago Poems," and who still is considered the best representative of those who have dealt in lusty terms with butchers and steel workers, the odor of a great

city, and the sprawl of an appalling civilization. Mr. Sandburg in fact has quite another side to him, a delicate lyric side, and both are revealed in the present selections; but he remains, a little unfortunately for him, the Chicago poet, meaning the rough poet, and it must be said that he has continued in both of his veins. He too, though in another way than Lindsay's, liberated poetry from the muse and lisping tradition; his rhythms are long and bold, and his voice is rapid and full. There was Edgar Lee Masters, too, the third of a distinguished trinity. His tone was critical. He was savage about a society which in his view rewarded greed and hypocrisy rather than justice and love. In "The Spoon River Anthology" Mr. Masters pried into the secrets of an Illinois town and discovered there, written on tombstones of his own making, a record scarcely rivalled elsewhere for the strength and bitterness of its irony.

But "Poetry" was not content with introducing these three Illinois poets. It looked eastward at the same time, and recognized the best work being done in that quarter. It has given prizes, for instance, to Mr. Robinson and Mr. Frost, who so often are paired not because they are alike but because they are assumed to be at the head of contemporary American poets. Mr. Robinson had been publishing poetry for more than a decade before "Poetry" arrived on the scene; but he is represented here by one of those narratives which have won him a distinguished position among all poets in the English tongue who have used verse as a means of presenting character. Mr. Robinson has done nearly all of his voluminous work in the field of human character. His early volumes did it briefly, in son-

nets, songs, and epigrams; his later volumes have done it in extended narrative; but he has always been faithful to his theme. And he too was radical in that he loaded his lines with ideas. His forms were superficially conventional, yet even there he molded them over for the purposes of conveying his whole mind upon the subjects of fate and failure. He too presents his difficulties—or rather, he too must be read with attention. Mr. Frost took still another way with blank verse. He modified its tempo in the interests of a conversational tone, which at first, perhaps, sounded prosaic, but which could not have been mistaken for prose very long, since Mr. Frost did powerful and moving things with it, as here in the far from ordinary story of a ghost. Mr. Frost gives a New England setting to this poem as he has to most of his other poems. He is a great deal more than a local poet, however; his perceptions and his tone of voice may begin by being Yankee but they end by being human; and of late years he has made it clear that he possesses a mystical gift, with ability also in somber employment of symbols to express the most subtle ideas.

Toward the east as well "Poetry" looked to find the Imagists, a school of highly self-conscious artists in diction and rhythm who boasted that they could cut themselves quite free from the soft, fat tradition of the old century. They were to do it by an application to images, which they considered the main business of poetry; and they were to cultivate a clean, hard, cutting edge as they chiselled away in their workshops. "H. D.," working mostly in Greek materials; Amy Lowell, ranging with energy over the whole field not only of her personal memories

but of European and American man; John Gould Fletcher, experimenting in color and sound, and later bending his gaze upon the American story both past and present; Ezra Pound, dashing into satire and later ploughing through translation—these enlivened the picture for a while, though eventually they were to develop, as individuals, programs and styles of their own.

In Constance Lindsay Skinner's American Indian poems may be seen a sample of the work published in that very rich field, a field of equal importance to ethnology and to poetry, but certainly of importance to poetry, since it covers the achievement of the first great American poets. In the restrained and finished rhymes of Edna Millay and Elinor Wylie the magazine gave a taste of some of the best work ever to be done by contemporary women poets, as in Lola Ridge it found a woman of fire who wrote about poor people as victims of a careless civilization, though later on she was to display a lyric talent of depth and scope. In Wallace Stevens, "Poetry" came upon a brittle and elusive genius who played in intricate stanzas upon the themes of futility and confusion.

It remained for "The Dial," however, to do the fullest justice to these themes, and in the present volume it is with the aid of "The Dial" that we may become acquainted with perhaps the most potent tradition now current. When in 1922 "The Dial" gave its annual poetry award to T. S. Eliot for "The Waste Land" it recognized one of the greatest of modern poems, and one of the most puzzling. The gulf between Illinois and Mr. Eliot is too wide for my words to jump it. Suffice it for the moment to say that in Mr. Eliot there is no vestige of the optimism with which

the renaissance had begun. "The Waste Land" is among other things a statement that our culture—the culture of Western man—has reached a state of distintegration, lying now only in a heap of fragments, symbolized throughout the poem by fragments of old poetry and new speech which jostle one another idly, with that silent irony used by items in a rubbish heap when they address one another. Marianne Moore and E. E. Cummings play variations on the same instrument. The instrument rarely plays in harmony with itself, but it needs to be listened to; and in Mr. Eliot's hands at least it has furnished some of the finest and best disciplined music of modern days.

The contributions of "Palms" and "Contemporary Verse" require no special comment, nor perhaps do those of "The Nation," though in the latter case we have an instance of a prize awarded annually by a magazine of more than purely literary complexion. Its choices being in most years radical, the reception over the country was invariably stormy. Yet it was always a spectacle to be looked forward to, and the fame which came to certain poems like Stephen Vincent Benêt's "King David" and Eli Siegel's "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana" was an interesting index of the importance attributed by the lay public to poetry.

"The Dial" is suspended, "The Nation" no longer holds its annual contest, and there are signs that the era of prizes is drawing to a close. Perhaps it is not; but if it is, then the collection which follows has all the more value as history. That it has value as poetry can hardly, I think, be denied. That it somewhat neglects the work of certain younger poets of great promise is regrettable yet inevitable,

since no contest has caught up with them. Perhaps that in itself is a sign of decline in the business of giving prizes. At any rate, here is an anthology with many distinguished riches in it, and with all that variety which marks the contemporary output.

MARK VAN DOREN.

New York
April, 1930

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The editors of The Nation, for permission to reprint their first prize poems with the notation that the 1921 award was split with Roy Helton's poem, "May Jones Takes the Air," and that the 1922 award was divided

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CHARLES A. WAGNER

Each group is headed with the name of the magazine which gave the prize. The date indicates the year during which it was awarded.

PRIZE POEMS

✶ 1913 ✶ 1929 ✶

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Poetry
1 9 1 3

NICHOLAS VACHEL LINDSAY

GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH ENTERS INTO HEAVEN

To be sung to the tune of
The Blood of the Lamb
with indicated instruments.

Bass Drums

Booth led boldly with his big bass drum.
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
The saints smiled gravely, and they said,
"He's come."
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Walking lepers followed, rank on rank,
Lurching bravos from the ditches dank,
Drabs from the alleyways and drug-fiends pale—
Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail!
Vermin-eaten saints with mouldy breath,
Unwashed legions with the ways of death—
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Banjos

Every slum had sent its half-a-score
The round world over—Booth had groaned for more.

Every banner that the wide world flies
Bloomed with glory and transcendent dyes.
Big-voiced lasses made their banjos bang!
Tranced, fanatical, they shrieked and sang,
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Hallelujah! It was queer to see
Bull-necked convicts with that land make free!
Loons with trumpets blowing blare, blare, blare—
On, on, upward through the golden air.
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Bass drum slower and softer

Booth died blind, and still by faith he trod,
Eyes still dazzled by the ways of God.
Booth led boldly and he looked the chief:
Eagle countenance in sharp relief,
Beard a-flying, air of high command
Unabated in that holy land.

Flutes

Jesus came from out the Court-House door,
Stretched his hands above the passing poor.
Booth saw not, but led his queer ones there
Round and round the mighty Court-House square.
Then in an instant all that blear review
Marched on spotless, clad in raiment new.
The lame were straightened, withered limbs uncurled
And blind eyes opened on a new sweet world.

and faster

Drabs and vixens in a flash made whole!
Gone was the weasel-head, the snout, the jowl:
Sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean,
Rulers of empires, and of forests green!

Grand chorus tambourines, all instruments in full blast

The hosts were sandalled and their wings were fire—
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
But their noise played havoc with the angel-choir
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Oh, shout Salvation! it was good to see
Kings and princes by the Lamb set free.
The banjos rattled, and the tambourines
Jing-jing-jingled in the hands of queens!

Reverently sung, no instruments

And when Booth halted by the curb for prayer
He saw his Master through the flag-filled air.
Christ came gently with a robe and crown
For Booth the soldier while the throng knelt down.
He saw King Jesus—they were face to face,
And he knelt a-weeping in that holy place.
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

···()···

Poetry
1 9 1 4

CARL SANDBURG

CHICAGO POEMS

CHICAGO

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:

They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I have seen your painted women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys.
And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: Yes, it is true I have seen the gunman kill and go free to kill again.
And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is: On the faces of women and children I have seen the marks of wanton hunger.
And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at this my city, and I give them back the sneer and say to them:
Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.

Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on job,
here is a tall bold slugger set vivid against the little soft cities;
Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning as a savage pitted against the wilderness,
Bareheaded,
Shoveling,
Wrecking,
Planning,
Building, breaking, rebuilding,
Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with white teeth,
Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man laughs,
Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has never lost a battle,
Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse, and under his ribs the heart of the people,
Laughing!
Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth, half-naked, sweating, proud to be Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation.

JAN KUBELIK

Your bow swept over a string, and a long low note quivered to the air.
(A mother of Bohemia sobs over a new child perfect learning to suck milk.)
Your bow ran fast over all the high strings fluttering and wild.

(All the girls in Bohemia are laughing on a Sunday afternoon in the hills with their lovers.)

THE HARBOR

Passing through huddled and ugly walls,
By doorways where women haggard
Looked from their hunger-deep eyes
Haunted with shadows of hunger-hands,
Out from the huddled and ugly walls,
I came sudden, at the city's edge,
On a blue burst of Lake,
Long lake waves breaking under the sun
On a spray-flung curve of shore;
And a fluttering storm of gulls,
Masses of great gray wings
And flying white bellies
Veering and wheeling free in the open.

THE HAMMER

I have seen
The old gods go
And the new gods come.

Day by day
And year by year
The idols fall
And the idols rise.

Today
I worship the hammer.

AT A WINDOW

Give me hunger,
O you gods that sit and give
The world its orders.
Give me hunger, pain and want,
Shut me out with shame and failure
From your doors of gold and fame,
Give me your shabbiest, weariest hunger!

But leave me a little love,
A voice to speak to me in the day end,
A hand to touch me in the dark room
Breaking the long loneliness.

In the dusk of day-shapes
Blurring the sunset,
One little wandering, western star
Thrust out from the changing shores of shadow.
Let me go to the window,
Watch there the day-shapes of dusk
And wait and know the coming
Of a little love.

LOST

Desolate and lone
All night long on the lake
Where fog trails and mist creeps,
The whistle of a boat
Calls and cries unendingly,
Like some lost child

In tears and trouble
Hunting the harbor's breast
And the harbor's eyes.

WHO AM I?

My head knocks against the stars.
My feet are on the hilltops.
My finger-tips are in the valleys and shores of universal life.
Down in the sounding foam of primal things I reach my hands and play with pebbles of destiny.
I have been to hell and back many times.
I know all about heaven, for I have talked with God.
I dabble in the blood and guts of the terrible.
I know the passionate seizure of beauty
And the marvelous rebellion of man at all signs reading "Keep Off."

My name is Truth and I am the most elusive captive in the universe.

MOMUS

Momus is the name men give your face,
The brag of its tone, like a long low steamboat whistle
Finding a way mid mist on a shoreland,
Where gray rocks let the salt water shatter spray
Against horizons purple, silent.

Yes, Momus,
Men have flung your face in bronze
To gaze in gargoyle downward on a street-whirl of folk.

They were artists did this, shaped your sad mouth,
Gave you a tall forehead slanted with calm, broad wisdom;
All your lips to the corners and your cheeks to the high bones
Thrown over and through with a smile that forever wishes and wished, purple, silent, fled from all the iron things of life, evaded like a sought bandit, gone into dreams, by God.

I wonder, Momus,
Whether shadows of the dead sit somewhere and look with deep laughter
On men who play in terrible earnest the old, known solemn repetitions of history.
A droning monotone soft as sea laughter hovers from your kindliness of bronze,
You give me the human ease of a mountain peak, purple, silent;
Granite shoulders heaving above the earth curves,
Careless eye-witness of the spawning tides of men and women
Swarming always in a drift of millions to the dust of toil, the salt of tears,
And blood drops of undiminishing war.

THE ROAD AND THE END

I shall foot it
Down the roadway in the dusk,
Where shapes of hunger wander
And the fugitives of pain go by.
I shall foot it

In the silence of the morning,
See the night slur into dawn,
Hear the slow great winds arise
Where tall trees flank the way
And then shoulder toward the sky.

The broken boulders by the road
Shall not commemorate my ruin.
Regret shall be the gravel under foot.
I shall watch for
Slim birds swift of wing
That go where wind and ranks of thunder
Drive the wild processionals of rain.

The dust of the travelled road
Shall touch my hands and face.

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Poetry
1 9 1 5

VACHEL LINDSAY

THE CHINESE NIGHTINGALE

A SONG IN CHINESE TAPESTRIES
DEDICATED TO S. T. F.

"How, How," he said. "Friend Chang," I said,
"San Francisco sleeps as the dead—
Ended license, lust and play:
Why do you iron the night away?

Your big clock speaks with a deadly sound,
With a tick and a wail till dawn comes round.
While the monster shadows glower and creep,
What can be better for man than sleep?"
"I will tell you a secret," Chang replied;
"My breast with vision is satisfied,
And I see green trees and fluttering wings,
And my deathless bird from Shanghai sings."
Then he lit five fire-crackers in a pan.
"Pop, pop!" said the fire-crackers, "cra-cra-crack!"
He lit a joss-stick long and black.
Then the proud gray joss in the corner stirred;
On his wrist appeared a gray small bird,
And this was the song of the gray small bird:

"Where is the princess, loved forever,
Who made Chang first of the kings of men?"

And the joss in the corner stirred again;
And the carved dog, curled in his arms, awoke,
Barked forth a smoke-cloud that whirled and broke.
It piled in a maze round the ironing-place,
And there on the snowy table wide
Stood a Chinese lady of high degree,
With a scornful, witching, tea-rose face
Yet she put away all form and pride,
And laid her glimmering veil aside
With a childlike smile for Chang and for me.

The walls fell back, night was aflower,
The table gleamed in a moonlit bower,
While Chang, with a countenance carved of stone,

Ironed and ironed, all alone.
And thus she sang to the busy man Chang:
"Have you forgotten. . . .
Deep in the ages, long, long ago,
I was your sweetheart, there on the sand—
Storm-worn beach of the Chinese land?
We sold our grain in the peacock town
Built on the edge of the sea-sands brown—
Built on the edge of the sea-sands brown . . .

"When all the world was drinking blood
From the skulls of men and bulls,
And all the world had swords and clubs of stone,
We drank our tea in China, beneath the sacred spice-trees,
And heard the curled waves of the harbor moan.
And this gray bird, in Love's first spring,
With a bright-bronze breast and a bronze-brown wing,
Captured the world with his carolling.
Do you remember, ages after,
At last the world we were born to own?
You were the heir of the yellow throne—
The world was the field of the Chinese man
And we were the pride of the sons of Han.
We copied deep books, and we carved in jade,
And wove blue silks in the mulberry shade." . . .

"I remember, I remember
That Spring came on forever,
That Spring came on forever."
Said the Chinese nightingale.
My heart was filled with marvel and dream
Though I saw the western street-lamps gleam,

Though dawn was bringing the western day,
Though Chang was a laundryman, ironing away. . . .
Mingled there, with the streets and alleys,
The railroad-yard, and the clock-tower bright,
Demon-clouds crossed ancient valleys;
Across wide lotos-ponds of light
I marked a giant firefly's flight.

And the lady, rosy-red,
Opened her fan, closed her fan,
Stretched her hand toward Chang, and said:
"Do you remember,
Ages after,
Our palace of heart-red stone?
Do you remember,
The little doll-faced children
With their lanterns full of moon-fire,
That came from all the empire
Honoring the throne?—
The loveliest fête and carnival
Our world had ever known?
The sages sat about us
With their heads bowed in their beards,
With proper meditation on the sight.
Confucius was not born;
We lived in those great days
Confucius later said were lived aright. . . .
And this gray bird, on that day of spring,
With a bright-bronze breast and a bronze-brown wing,
Captured the world with his carolling.
Late at night his tune was spent.
Peasants,

Sages,
Children,
Homeward went,
And then the bronze bird sang for you and me.
We walked alone, our hearts were high and free.
I had a silvery name, I had a silvery name,
I had a silvery name—do you remember
The name you cried beside the tumbling sea?"

Chang turned not to the lady slim—
He bent to his work, ironing away;
But she was arch and knowing and glowing.
For the bird on his shoulder spoke for him.

"Darling . . . darling . . . darling . . . darling . . ."
Said the Chinese nightingale.

The great gray joss on the rustic shelf,
Rakish and shrewd, with his collar awry,
Sang impolitely, as though by himself,
Drowning with his bellowing the nightingale's cry:
"Back through a hundred, hundred years
Hear the waves as they climb the piers,
Hear the howl of the silver seas,
Hear the thunder!
Hear the gongs of holy China
How the waves and tunes combine
In a rhythmic clashing wonder,
Incantation old and fine:

"Dragons, dragons, Chinese Dragons;
Red fire-crackers, and green fire-crackers,
And dragons, dragons, Chinese Dragons."

Then the lady, rosy-red,
Turned to her lover Chang and said:
"Dare you forget that turquoise dawn
When we stood on our mist-hung velvet lawn,
And worked a spell this great joss taught
Till a God of the Dragons was charmed and caught?
From the flag high over our palace-home
He flew to our feet in rainbow-foam—
A king of beauty and tempest and thunder
Panting to tear our sorrows asunder,
A Dragon of fair adventure and wonder.
We mounted the back of that royal slave
With thoughts of desire that were noble and grave.
We swam down the shore to the dragon-mountains,
We whirled to the peaks and the fiery fountains.
To our secret ivory house we were borne.

We looked down the wonderful wing-filled regions
Where the dragons darted in glimmering legions.
Right by my breast the nightingale sang;
The old rhymes rang in the sunlit mist
That we this hour regain—
Song-fire for the brain.
When my hands and my hair and my feet you kissed,
When you cried for your heart's new pain,
What was my name in the dragon-mist,
In the rings of rainbowed rain?"

"Sorrow and love, glory and love,"
Said the Chinese nightingale,
"Sorrow and love, glory and love,"
Said the Chinese nightingale.

And now the joss broke in with his song:
"Dying ember, bird of Chang,
Soul of Chang, do you remember?—
Ere you returned to the shining harbor
There were pirates by ten thousand
Descended on the town
In vessels mountain-high and red and brown,
Moon-ships that climbed the storms and cut the skies.
On their prows were painted terrible bright eyes.
But I was then a wizard and a scholar and a priest;
I stood upon the sand;
With lifted hand I looked upon them
And sunk their vessels with my wizard eyes,
And the stately lacquer-gate made safe again.
Deep, deep below the bay, the sea-weed and the spray,
Embalmed in amber every pirate lies,
Embalmed in amber every pirate lies."

Then this did the noble lady say:
"Bird, do you dream of our home-coming day
When you flew like a courier on before
From the dragon-peak to our palace-door,
And we drove the steed in your singing path—
The ramping dragon of laughter and wrath;
And found our city all aglow,
And knighted this joss that decked it so?
There were golden fishes in the purple river
And silver fishes and rainbow fishes.
There were golden junks in the laughing river,
And silver junks and rainbow junks:
There were golden lilies by the bay and river,
And silver lilies and tiger-lilies,

And tinkling wind-bells in the gardens of the town
By the black-lacquer-gate
Where walked in state
The kind king Chang
And his sweet-heart mate. . . .
With his flag born dragon
And his crown of pearl . . . and . . . jade;
And his nightingale reigning in the mulberry shade,
And sailors and soldiers on the sea-sands brown,
And priests who bowed them down to your song—
By the city called Han, the peacock town,
By the city called Han, the nightingale town,
The nightingale town."
Then sang the bird, so strangely gay,
Fluttering, fluttering, ghostly and gray,
A vague, unravelling, final tune,
Like a long unwinding silk cocoon;
Sang as though for the soul of him
Who ironed away in that bower dim:

"I have forgotten
Your dragons great,
Merry and mad and friendly and bold.
Dim is your proud lost palace-gate.
I vaguely know
There were heroes of old,
Troubles more than the heart could hold,
There were wolves in the woods
Yet lambs in the fold,
Nests in the top of the almond tree. . . .
The evergreen tree . . . and the mulberry tree. . . .
Life and hurry and joy forgotten,

Years on years I but half-remember . . .
Man is a torch, then ashes soon,
May and June, then dead December,
Dead December, then again June.

Who shall end my dream's confusion?
Life is a loom, weaving illusion. . . .
I remember, I remember
There were ghostly veils and laces . . .
In the shadowy, bowery places . . .
With lovers' ardent faces
Bending to one another,
Speaking each his part.
They infinitely echo
In the red cave of my heart.
"Sweetheart, sweetheart, sweetheart!"
They said to one another.
They spoke, I think, of perils past
They spoke, I think, of peace at last.
One thing I remember:
"Spring came on forever,
Spring came on forever,"
Said the Chinese nightingale.

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Poetry
1 9 1 5

H. D.

THE WIND SLEEPERS

Whiter
than the crust
left by the tide,
we are stung by the hurled sand
and the broken shells.

We no longer sleep,
sleep in the wind.
We awoke and fled
through the Peiraeic gate.

Tear—
tear us an altar.
Tug at the cliff-boulders,
pile them with the rough stones.
We no longer
sleep in the wind.
Propitiate us.

Chant in a wail
that never halts.

Pace a circle and pay tribute
with a song.
When the roar of a dropped wave
breaks into it,
pour meted words
of sea-hawks and gulls
and sea-birds that cry
discords.

STORM

I

You crash over the trees.
you crack the live branch:
the branch is white,
and green crushed,
each leaf is rent like split wood.

2

You burden the trees
with black drops,
you swirl and crash:
you have broken off a weighted leaf
in the wind—
it is hurled out,
whirls up and sinks,
a green stone.

THE POOL

Are you alive?
I touch you with my thumb.

You quiver like a sea-fish.
I cover you with my net.
What are you, banded-one?

THE GARDEN

I

You are clear,
O rose, cut in rock.

I could scrape the color
from the petals,
like spilt dye from a rock.

If I could break you
I could break a tree.

If I could stir
I could break a tree,
I could break you.

2

O wind, rend open the heat,
cut apart the heat,
slit it to tatters.
Fruit cannot drop
through this thick air:
fruit cannot fall into heat
that presses up and blunts
the points of pears,
and rounds grapes.

Cut the heat:
plough through it,
turning it on either side
of your path.

MOONRISE

Will you glimmer on the sea?
Will you fling your spear-head
on the shore?
What note shall we pitch?

We have a song,
on the bank we share our arrows—
the loosed string tells our note:

O flight,
bring her swiftly to our song.
She is great,
we measure her by the pine-trees.

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Poetry
1915

CONSTANCE LINDSAY SKINNER

SONGS OF THE COAST-DWELLERS

SONG OF THE SEARCH

I descend through the forest alone.
Rose-flushed are the willows, stark and a-quiver,

In the warm sudden grasp of Spring;
Like a woman when her lover has suddenly, swiftly taken
her.
I hear the secret rustle of the little leaves
Waiting to be born.
The air is a wind of love
From the wings of eagles mating.
O eagles, my sky is dark with your wings!
The hills and the waters pity me,
The pine-trees reproach me.
The little moss whispers under my feet,
"Son of Earth, Brother,
Why comest thou hither alone?"

Oh, the wolf has his mate on the mountain—
Where art thou, Spring-daughter?
I tremble with love as the reeds by the river,
I burn as the dusk in the red-tented west,
I call thee aloud as the deer calls the doe,
I await thee as hills wait the morning,
I desire thee as eagles the storm,
I yearn to thy breast as night to the sea,
I claim thee as the silence claims the stars.
O Earth, Earth, great Earth,
Mate of God and mother of me,
Say, where is she, the Bearer of Morning,
My Bringer of Song?
Love in me waits to be born,
Where is She, the Woman?

SONG OF WHIP-PLAITING

In the dawn I gathered cedar-boughs
For the plaiting of thy whip.

They were wet with sweet drops;
They still thought of the night.
All alone I shredded cedar-boughs,
Green boughs in the pale light
Where the morning meets the sea
And the great mountain stops.

I heard no sound but the whisper of my knife,
My black flint knife.
It whispered among the white strands of the cedar,
Whispered in parting the sweet cords for thy whip.
O sweet-smelling juice of cedar—
Life-ooze of love!
My knife drips:
Its whisper is the only sound in all the world!

Finer than young sea-lions' hairs
Are my cedar-strands:
They are fine as little roots deep down.
(O little roots of cedar
Far, far under the bosom of Tsa-Kumts!—
They have plaited her through with love.)
Now, into my love-gift
Closely, strongly, I will weave them—
Little strands of pain!
Since I saw thee
Standing with thy torch in my doorway
Their little roots are deep in me.

In the dawn I gathered cedar-boughs:
Sweet, sweet was their odor,
They were wet with tears!

The sweetness will not leave my hands,
No, not in salt sea-washings:
Tears will not wash away sweetness.
I shall have sweet hands for thy service.

(Ah—sometimes—thou wilt be gentle?
Little roots of pain are deep, deep in me
Since I saw thee standing in my doorway.)

I have quenched thy torch—
I have plaited thy whip.
I am thy Woman!

SONG OF THE YOUNG MOTHER

M'-m'-m'-m'-n! N'-n'-n'-n'-m!
Ai-i-he-i—ah-o-he-a-i-ne—
Swing my Chiefling fragrantly
On the cedar-branch.
Cedar, Cedar, tenderly
Sway to the singing wind.
Bright flying Wind with song in thy white throat
And light in thy wide sea-eyes,
The sky's blue feathers on thy wing—
Oh blow, blow, gently, softly, Wind,
Rock my Chiefling, Wind,
In his little woven cradle.

When thou wast still a seedling
Deep in mine earth, months deep,
I sat in thy father's doorway making thy cradle.
At the first light, eager I rose to the weaving;

In the dusk my fingers still threaded,
Needing no light.
I remember my mother sat near me often, watching;
Sometimes weeping. Yes, she wept;
Yet answered not when I asked wherefor.
In the night thou hast waked me at his side—
Dancing, in thy dark house, to the doors that soon must open
On thy white shining dawn-shores of life:
And I have seen the Moon-Woman's round face
Laughing through the smoke-hole, mocking,
Pointing to thy empty cradle hanging.
Ai! but her smile grew kind! She said,
"Wait a little longer, impatient one;
When next my round face peeps through the smoke-hole,
I will seek him at your breast."
Ai-i-hi! Very precious is the man-child!
Ere it is born a woman loves it.
How cam'st thou here, little Chiefling?
A woman gave thee life!
Yes—my mother wept, watching me weave for thee....
And I have wept, too, a little.

Strange, that pain came with love;
I knew it not until thy father sought me.
Yet—what woman would cast love out?

Gladly in the dusk I waited him—
None told me, not my mother even, of the pang.
So my heart, joyous, sounded a song of drums,
Beating the loud wild march for his swift-trampling feet.
The breasts of love were as the eaves of a house

Jutting through the red mists and the dusk of ending day,
Calling the hunter to enter to his rest.
The door trembled with strange winds—
He circled my house with the arms of strength,
And took me with weapons. . . . Joy?
Ay. Yet I cried from the depths with a sudden deep cry,
And in grieving earth was the torch quenched.
. . . Darkness . . . and his, his utterly, in that dark. . . .
None had told me. . . .
Nor that his strength would leap, rejoicing at my cry.

At dawn—it is our custom—I went forth alone
Into the mists that wrap the sleeping cedars
And droop to the pale unwakened sea.
Alone on the dawn's white rim I gathered cedar-boughs.
My tears fell, shining among the earth's bright drops;
For now I knew
Why the maiden plaits a whip of cedar-fibre
To give into her husband's hand on her marriage-day.
Once I asked my father—it seemed so strange
A maid should weave and weave a rod for her own sorrow.
He laughed and said: "It is our custom; ay, an old custom;
I know not if it means aught now,
Or ever did have meaning."
My mother sat near. Ay, I have remembered that she spoke
not;
But, silently, in the shadow of his body, drooped her head.

Ay, 'tis old, the custom,
Old as earth is old;
Ancient as passion,
Pitiless as passion—

Ay, pitiless, pitiless, the earth-way for women!
Bitter it is, as the taste of bright sea-water,
That he, who takes the gift, and wields our weaving of desire,
Knows not the meaning of the gift—nor can know ever!
Into the heedless hand of passion
We yield our power-of-pain....

It is the law of the earth-way.

So it is with birth-giving.
Aii-he! the mightier pang,
The mightier loving!
And thou and thy father, the two Strong Ones,
Glad, glad, of the woman's pain-cry!
M'-m'-m'-m'-n—Ai-i-he-i—
Sleepest thou, little Fatling?
Ay, thou didst long drink at my breast—
(But hast not drained it of love.)
Cedar, Cedar, carefully
Guard my little brown cone
On thy earth-bending branch.
M'-m'-m'-m'-n—Ai-i-he-i—
Little life-bud on the bough
Sleep, sleep, thou drowsy one—
Thou art guarded well.
Ay, rock, rock, safely, safely, little Man-Child—
A woman watches thee.

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Poetry
1 9 2 0

WALLACE STEVENS

PECKSNIFFIANA

FABLIAU OF FLORIDA

Barque of phosphor
On the palmy beach,

Move outward into heaven,
Into the alabasters
And night blues.

Foam and cloud are one.
Sultry moon-monsters
Are dissolving.

Fill your black hull
With white moonlight.

There will never be an end
To this droning of the surf.

In the sea, Biscayne, there prinks
The young emerald, evening star—
Good light for drunkards, poets, widows,
And ladies soon to be married.

By this light the salty fishes
Arch in the sea like tree-branches,
Going in many directions
Up and down.

This light conducts
The thoughts of drunkards, the feelings
Of widows and trembling ladies,
The movements of fishes.

How pleasant an existence it is
That this emerald charms philosophers,
Until they become thoughtlessly willing
To bathe their hearts in later moonlight,

Knowing that they can bring back thought
In the night that is still to be silent,
Reflecting this thing and that,
Before they sleep.

It is better that, as scholars,
They should think hard in the dark cuffs
Of voluminous cloaks,
And shave their heads and bodies.

It might well be that their mistress
Is no gaunt fugitive phantom.
She might, after all, be a wanton,
Abundantly beautiful, eager.

Fecund,
From whose being by starlight, on sea-coast,
The innermost good of their seeking
Might come in the simplest of speech.

It is a good light, then, for those
That know the ultimate Plato,
Tranquillizing with this jewel
The torments of confusion.

THE WEEPING BURGHER

It is with a strange malice
That I distort the world.

Ah! that ill humors
Should mask as white girls.
And ah! that Scaramouche
Should have a black barouche.

The sorry verities!
Yet in excess, continual,
There is cure of sorrow.

Permit that if as ghost I come
Among the people burning in me still,
I come as belle design
Of foppish line.

And I, then, tortured for old speech,
A white of wildly woven rings;
I, weeping in a calcined heart,
My hands such sharp, imagined things.

PETER PARASOL

Aux taureaux Dieu cornes donne
Et sabots durs aux chevaux....

Why are not women fair,
All, as Andromache—
Having, each one, most praisable
Ears, eyes, soul, skin, hair?

Good God! That all beasts should have
The tusks of the elephant,
Or be beautiful
As large, ferocious tigers are.

It is not so with women.
I wish they were all fair,
And walked in fine clothes,
With parasols, in the afternoon air.

EXPOSITION OF THE CONTENTS OF A CAB

Victoria Clementina, negress,
Took seven white dogs
To ride in a cab.

Bells of the dogs chinked.
Harness of the horses shuffled
Like brazen shells.

Oh-he-he! Fragrant puppets
By the green lake-pallors,
She too is flesh,

And a breech-cloth might wear,
Netted of topaz and ruby
And savage blooms;

Thridding the squawkiest jungle
In a golden sedan,
White dogs at bay.

What breech-cloth might you wear—
Except linen, embroidered
By elderly women?

PLOUGHING ON SUNDAY

The white cock's tail
Tosses in the wind.
The turkey-cock's tail
Glitters in the sun.

Water in the fields.
The wind pours down.
The feathers flare
And bluster in the wind.

Remus, blow your horn!
I'm ploughing on Sunday,
Ploughing North America.
Blow your horn!

Tum-ti-tum,
Ti-tum-tum-tum!
The turkey-cock's tail
Spreads to the sun.
The white cock's tail
Streams to the moon.
Water in the fields.
The wind pours down.

BANAL SOJOURN

Two wooden tubs of blue hydrangeas stand at the foot of the stone steps.
The sky is a blue gum streaked with rose. The trees are black.
The grackles crack their throats of bone in the smooth air.
Moisture and heat have swollen the garden into a slum of bloom.
Pardie! Summer is like a fat beast, sleepy in mildew,
Our old bane, green and bloated, serene, who cries,
"That bliss of stars, that princox of evening heaven!" reminding of seasons,
When radiance came running down, slim through the bareness.
And so it is one damns that green shade at the bottom of the land.
For who can care at the wigs despoiling the Satan ear?

And who does not seek the sky unfuzzed, soaring to the princox?
One has a malady, here, a malady. One feels a malady.

THE INDIGO GLASS IN THE GRASS

Which is real—
This bottle of indigo glass in the grass,
Or the bench with the pot of geraniums, the stained mattress and the washed overalls drying in the sun?
Which of these truly contains the world?
Neither one, nor the two together.

ANECDOTE OF THE JAR

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

OF THE SURFACE OF THINGS

I

In my room, the world is beyond my understanding;
But when I walk I see that it consists of three or four hills
and a cloud.

II

From my balcony, I survey the yellow air,
Reading where I have written,
"The spring is like a belle undressing."

III

The gold tree is blue.
The singer has pulled his cloak over his head.
The moon is in the folds of the cloak.

THE CURTAINS IN THE HOUSE OF THE METAPHYSICIAN

It comes about that the drifting of these curtains
Is full of long motions; as the ponderous
Deflations of distance; or as clouds
Inseparable from their afternoons;
Or the changing of light, the dropping
Of the silence, wide sleep and solitude
Of night, in which all motion
Is beyond us, as the firmament,
Up-rising and down-falling, bares
The last largeness, bold to see.

THE PLACE OF THE SOLITAIRES

Let the place of the solitaires
Be a place of perpetual undulation.

Whether it be in mid-sea
On the dark, green water-wheel,
Or on the beaches,
There must be no cessation
Of motion, or of the noise of motion,
The renewal of noise
And manifold continuation;
And, most, of the motion of thought
And its restless iteration,
In the place of the solitaires,
Which is to be a place of perpetual undulation.

THE PALTRY NUDE STARTS ON A SPRING VOYAGE

But not on a shell, she starts,
Archaic, for the sea.
But on the first-found weed
She scuds the glitters,
Noiselessly, like one more wave.

She too is discontent
And would have purple stuff upon her arms,
Tired of the salty harbors,
Eager for the brine and bellowing
Of the high interiors of the sea.

The wind speeds her,
Blowing upon her hands
And watery back.
She touches the clouds, where she goes,
In the circle of her traverse of the sea.

Yet this is meagre play
In the scurry and water-shine,
As her heels foam—
Not as when the goldener nude
Of a later day
Will go, like the centre of sea-green pomp,
In an intenser calm,
Scullion of fate,
Across the spick torrent, ceaselessly,
Upon her irretrievable way.

COLLOQUY WITH A POLISH AUNT

Elle savait toutes les legendes du Paradis et tous les contes de la Pologne. *Revue des Deux Mondes*

She
How is that my saints from Voragine,
In their embroidered slippers, touch your spleen?

He
Old pantaloons, duenna of the spring!

She
Imagination is the will of things . . .
Thus, on the basis of the common drudge,

You dream of women, swathed in indigo,
Holding their books toward the nearer stars,
To read, in secret, burning secrecies. . . .

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Poetry
1 9 2 0

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

THE BEAN-STALK

Ho, Giant! This is I!
I have built me a bean-stalk into your sky!
La—but it's lovely, up so high!

This is how I came—I put
There my knee, here my foot,
Up and up, from shoot to shoot;
And the blessed bean-stalk thinning
Like the mischief all the time,
Till it took me rocking, spinning,
In a dizzy, sunny circle,
Making angles with the root,
Far and out above the cackle
Of the city I was born in;
Till the little dirty city,
In the light so sheer and sunny,
Shone as dazzling bright and pretty
As the money that you find
In a dream of finding money—

What a wind! what a morning!—
Till the tiny, shiny city,
When I shot a glance below
Shaken with a giddy laughter
Sick and blissfully afraid,
Was a dew-drop on a blade,
And a pair of moments after
Was the whirling guess I made;
And the wind was like a whip
Cracking past my icy ears,
And my hair stood out behind,
And my eyes were full of tears,
Wide-open and cold,
More tears than they could hold;
The wind was blowing so,
And my teeth were in a row,
Dry and grinning,
And I felt my foot slip,
And I scratched the wind and whined,
And I clutched the stalk and jabbered
With my eyes shut blind—
What a wind: what a wind!

Your broad sky, Giant,
Is the shelf of a cupboard.
I make bean-stalks—I'm
A builder like yourself;
But bean-stalks is my trade—
I couldn't make a shelf,
Don't know how they're made.
Now, a bean-stalk is more pliant—
La, what a climb!

···()···

The Nation
1 9 2 1

JAMES RORTY

PRELUDE

WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN

On that day
The postman will blow a shrill whistle down the street
And the white faces of a hundred million sleepers will brighten and smile in their sleep,
And the bells will ring in the church steeples and the high towers rock, and the newsboys will run crying the wildest extra since life began;
And the world will wake sweetly to the smile of a bluebird's warble and the gold-blue morning bugles of a thousand cock-crows chanting "Victory."

O that day!
I can see four generals goose-stepping down the Main Street of the world doing a burlesque,
And two of them are happy-drunk, and they sit in the street with mud on their uniforms that was never there before;
And one of them gets down on his hands and knees like a seventy-five and barks:

Blah! . . . Blah! . . . Blah-blah!

And the other squats down opposite him in the mud and barks:

Blah! . . . Blah! . . . Blah-blah!

And suddenly they stop arguing and weep as if their hearts would break, and kiss each other;

And the generals love the world and the world loves the generals and the bells tear themselves loose in the church steeples, and the newsboys pant as they run crying the wildest extra since life began.

O that day!

I can see a statesman that has found his soul, and there is no holding him—he runs off shouting "Hallelujah! you shan't take it away, you shan't take it away."

And he gets a gown and a crown and a star to himself, and there he sits and plays on the harp through all eternity—

O that day!

I can see a magnate sitting on a heap of broken machinery, and he is singing like a nightingale and washing his hands in the moonlight, and he is mad with loving the moon, and he lifts his arms like a Druid and chants as no nightingale ever chanted since the world began.

O that day!

I can hear the deep contralto singing of the Rat-Wife; I can see her weaving pity with her hands until the multitudes of the maimed and the halt and the death-desiring follow her rejoicing down the valleys to the sea.

O that day!
The music will ache in my heart on that day, and I shall say:
Old man, give me the bow.
And I shall want a thousand cellos and ten thousand violins and a hundred piccolos, and how I shall caper and smash among the kettledrums!
And I shall play a dawn prelude over the white faces of the hundred million sleepers till they brighten and smile as the violins shimmer and sweep;
And the bells will ring out in the steeples, and the tall towers rock, and the light will come blowing high horns out of the east, and the world will wake sweetly to the smile of a bluebird's warble and the gold-blue morning bugles of a thousand cock-crows;
And I shall caper and smash among the kettledrums until not one sleeper is left asleep, and the laughter of all the gods will roll out with the sunrise, and we shall live, we shall live, we shall live!
O that day!

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The Dial
1 9 2 2

T. S. ELIOT

THE WASTE LAND

THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.
What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock)
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

Frisch weht der Wind
Der Heimat Zu,
Mein Irisch Kind,
Wo weilest du?

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
They called me the hyacinth girl."
—Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
Od' und leer das Meer
Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,
Had a bad cold, nevertheless
Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)

Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
The lady of situations.
Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.
I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.
Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,
Tell her I bring the horoscope myself;
One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: "Stetson!
You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!"

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes
Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air
That freshened from the window, these ascended
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
Huge sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous King
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
"Jug Jug" to dirty ears.
And other withered stumps of time
Were told upon the walls; staring forms
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.

Footsteps shuffled on the stair,
Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in fiery points
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

"My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.
What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
I never know what you are thinking. Think."

I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones.

"What is that noise?"
The wind under the door.
"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"
Nothing again nothing.
"Do
You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
Nothing?"
I remember
Those are pearls that were his eyes.
"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"
But
O O O O that Shakesperian Rag—
It's so elegant
So intelligent

"What shall I do now? What shall I do?
I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
With my hair down, so. . . . What shall we do to-morrow?
What shall we ever do?"
The hot water at ten.

And if it rains, a closed car at four.
And we shall play a game of chess,
Pressing Lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.
When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said,
I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.
And no more can't I, I said, and thinking of poor Albert,
He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,
And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.
Oh is there, she said. Something O' that, I said.
Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said,
Others can pick and choose if you can't.
But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling.
You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.
(And her only thirty-one)
I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,
It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.
(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)
The chemist said it would be all right, but I've never been the same.
You are a proper fool, I said.
Well if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,

What you get married for if you don't want children?
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Well that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,
And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.
Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.
Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

THE FIRE SERMON

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.
And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;
Departed, have left no addresses.
By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept....
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.
But at my back in a cold blast I hear
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him.
White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter.
They wash their feet in soda water
Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!

Twit twit twit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug
So rudely forc'd
Tereu

Unreal City
Under the brown fog of a winter noon
Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
C.i.f. London: documents at sight,
Asked me in demotic French
To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
Followed by a week-end at the Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits

Like a taxi throbbing waiting
I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,
The typist home at tea-time, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.
I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—
I too awaited the expected guest.
He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,
A small house-agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
One of the low on whom assurance sits
As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.
The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.
(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
Enacted on this same divan or bed;
I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.)
Bestows one final patronizing kiss,
And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit....

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
"Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."
When lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone.

"This music crept by me upon the waters"
And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
O City City, I can sometimes hear
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
The pleasant whining of a mandoline
And a clatter and a chatter from within
Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls
Of Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.
The river sweats
Oil and tar
The barges drift
With the turning tide
Red sails
Wide
To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
The barges wash,
Drifting logs
Down Greenwich reach
Past the Isle of Dogs.
Weialala Leia
Wallala Leialala
Elizabeth and Leicester

Beating oars
The stern was formed
A gilded shell
Red and gold
The brisk swell
Rippled both shores
South-west wind
Carried down stream
The peal of bells
White towers
Weialala Leia
Wallala Leialala

"Trams and dusty trees.
Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe."

"My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart
Under my feet. After the event
He wept. He promised 'a new start.'
I made no comment. What should I resent?"

"On Margate Sands.
I can connect
Nothing with nothing.
The broken finger-nails of dirty hands.
My people humble people who expect
Nothing."

LA LA

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest

burning

DEATH BY WATER

Phlebas the Phœnician, fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.
A current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.
Gentile or Jew
O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

After the torch-light red on sweaty faces
After the frosty silence in the gardens
After the agony in stony places
The shouting and the crying
Prison and palace and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains

He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience
Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were only water amongst the rock
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mud-cracked houses
If there were water
And no rock
If there were rock
And also water
And water
A spring
A pool among the rock
If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
—But who is that on the other side of you?

What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted
wells.

In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing

Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home,
It has no windows, and the door swings,
Dry bones can harm no one.
Only a cock stood on the roof-tree
Co co rico co co rico
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
Bringing rain

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
Then spoke the thunder
Da
Datta: what have we given?
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries
Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
In our empty rooms
Da
Dayadhvam: I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
Only at nightfall, aetherial rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus
Da

Damyata: The boat responded
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands
I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam ceu chelidon—O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine a la tour abolie
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih

...()...

Poetry
1 9 2 2

ROBERT FROST

THE WITCH OF COOS

I staid the night for shelter at a farm
Behind the mountain, with a mother and son,
Two old-believers. They did all the talking.

The Mother
Folks think a witch who has familiar spirits
She could call up to pass a winter evening,
But won't, should be burned at the stake or something.
Summoning spirits isn't "Button, button,
Who's got the button," you're to understand.

The Son
Mother can make a common table rear
And kick with two legs like an army mule.

The Mother
And when I've done it, what good have I done?
Rather than tip a table for you, let me
Tell you what Ralle the Sioux Control once told me.
He said the dead had souls, but when I asked him
How that could be—I thought the dead were souls,
He broke my trance. Don't that make you suspicious
That there's something the dead are keeping back?
Yes, there's something the dead are keeping back.

The Son
You wouldn't want to tell him what we have
Up attic, mother?

The Mother
Bones—a skeleton.

The Son
But the headboard of mother's bed is pushed
Against the attic door: the door is nailed.

It's harmless. Mother hears it in the night
Halting perplexed behind the barrier
Of door and headboard. Where it wants to get
Is back into the cellar where it came from.

The Mother
We'll never let them, will we, son? We'll never!

The Son
It left the cellar forty years ago
And carried itself like a pile of dishes
Up one flight from the cellar to the kitchen,
Another from the kitchen to the bedroom,
Another from the bedroom to the attic,
Right past both father and mother, and neither stopped it,
Father had gone upstairs; mother was downstairs.
I was a baby: I don't know where I was.

The Mother
The only fault my husband found with me
I went to sleep before I went to bed,
Especially in winter when the bed
Might just as well be ice and the clothes snow.
The night the bones came up the cellar-stairs
Toffile had gone to bed alone and left me,
But left an open door to cool the room off
So as to sort of turn me out of it.
I was just coming to myself enough
To wonder where the cold was coming from,
When I heard Toffile upstairs in the bedroom
And thought I heard him downstairs in the cellar.
The board we had laid down to walk dry-shod on
When there was water in the cellar in spring

Struck the hard cellar bottom. And then someone
Began the stairs, two footsteps for each step,
The way a man with one leg and a crutch,
Or little child, comes up. It wasn't Toffile:
It wasn't anyone who could be there.
The bulkhead double-doors were double-locked
And swollen tight and buried under snow.
The cellar windows were banked up with sawdust
And swollen tight and buried under snow.
It was the bones. I knew them—and good reason.
My first impulse was to get to the knob
And hold the door. But the bones didn't try
The door; they halted helpless on the landing,
Waiting for things to happen in their favor.
The faintest restless rustling ran all through them.
I never could have done the thing I did
If the wish hadn't been too strong in me
To see how they were mounted for this walk.
I had a vision of them put together
Not like a man, but like a chandelier.
So suddenly I flung the door wide on him.
A moment he stood balancing with emotion,
And all but lost himself. (A tongue of fire
Flashed out and licked along his upper teeth.
Smoke rolled inside the sockets of his eyes.)
Then he came at me with one hand outstretched,
The way he did in life once, but this time
I struck the hand off brittle on the floor,
And fell back from him on the floor myself.
The finger-pieces slid in all directions.
(Where did I see one of those pieces lately?
Hand me my button-box—it must be there.)

I sat up on the floor and shouted, "Toffile,
It's coming up to you." It had its choice
Of the door to the cellar or the hall.
It took the hall door for the novelty,
And set off briskly for so slow a thing,
Still going every which way in the joints, though,
So that it looked like lightning or a scribble,
From the slap I had just now given its hand.
I listened till it almost climbed the stairs
From the hall to the only finished bedroom,
Before I got up to do anything;
Then ran and shouted, "Shut the bedroom door,
Toffile, for my sake!" "Company," he said,
"Don't make me get up; I'm too warm in bed."
So lying forward weakly on the handrail
I pushed myself upstairs, and in the light
(The kitchen had been dark) I had to own
I could see nothing. "Toffile, I don't see it.
It's with us in the room, though. It's the bones."
"What bones?" "The cellar bones—out of the grave."

That made him throw his bare legs out of bed
And sit up by me and take hold of me.
I wanted to put out the light and see
If I could see it, or else mow the room,
With our arms at the level of our knees,
And bring the chalk-pile down. "I'll tell you what—
It's looking for another door to try.
The uncommonly deep snow has made him think
Of his old song, The Wild Colonial Boy,
He always used to sing along the tote-road.
He's after an open door to get out-doors.

Let's trap him with an open door up attic."
Toffile agreed to that, and sure enough,
Almost the moment he was given an opening,
The steps began to climb the attic stairs.
I heard them. Toffile didn't seem to hear them.
"Quick!" I slammed to the door and held the knob.
"Toffile, get nails." I made him nail the door shut,
And push the headboard of the bed against it.

Then we asked was there anything
Up attic that we'd ever want again.
The attic was less to us than the cellar.
If the bones liked the attic, let them like it,
Let them stay in the attic. When they sometimes
Come down the stairs at night and stand perplexed
Behind the door and headboard of the bed,
Brushing their chalky skull with chalky fingers,
With sounds like the dry rattling of a shutter,
That's what I sit up in the dark to say—
To no one any more since Toffile died.
Let them stay in the attic since they went there.
I promised Toffile to be cruel to them
For helping them be cruel once to him.

The Son
We think they had a grave down in the cellar.

The Mother
We know they had a grave down in the cellar.

The Son
We never could find out whose bones they were.

The Mother
Yes, we could too, Son. Tell the truth for once.
They were a man's his father killed for me.
I mean a man he killed instead of me.
The least I could do was help dig their grave.
We were about it one night in the cellar.
Son knows the story: but 'twas not for him
To tell the truth, suppose the time had come.
Son looks surprised to see me end a lie
We'd kept up all these years between ourselves
So as to have it ready for outsiders.
But tonight I don't care enough to lie—
I don't remember why I ever cared.
Toffile, if he were here, I don't believe
Could tell you why he ever cared himself. . . .

She hadn't found the finger-bone she wanted
Among the buttons poured out in her lap.

I verified the name next morning: Toffile.
The rural letter-box said Toffile Barre.

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Poetry
1 9 2 2

ALFRED KREYMBORG

PIANISSIMO

Two elderly gentlemen, in clothes even older than themselves, are just sitting down—with the outward aid of

crooked canes and the inward support of sighs—on what is presumably a park bench, shaded by mountain laurels, with a swan-pond for a background. The men also carry the venerable pipes of tradition: in this case, heavily crusted corn-cobs. Their speech, very slow and gentle, gives them the sound of impersonal instruments improvising a harmless duo: prosaic music blown into the air at the end of smoke spirals, the re-lighting of pipes necessarily frequent. The only apparent difference between them, traceable perhaps to the unconscious bias of habitual meditation and perpetual comparison of ideas, has reduced itself to a slight wagging of the head on the part of the one as opposed to a slight nodding on the part of the other. Speech and movement coincide almost as caressingly as the effect produced by lips brushing wood-instruments.

Henry: Nay, but I insist
that the quick sharp touches the rain
and slower titillation the sun
put upon those flowers we saw
have in them the same heedless passion,
heedless of all save the self,
which envelops unconscious adolescence.
That isn't the type of caress I'm seeking.
Hodge: Those flowers were pale indeed
with a suggestion of pink and beginning of blue!
Henry: Early degrees of coloration
solely indicative of the mood
of self-interest of rain and of sun;
alternately shaping something,
like a left hand and right
of one and the same conjurer

reproducing his own vague image:
the flower somehow a captive,
clay just as we are,
subject to the next modulation
towards the next helpless state of being.
I've had my share and enough
of such no longer magical passes.

Hodge: Nearer to red and closer to purple!

Henry: That is the type of caress
which has made of what I was
the droning instrument I am,
played upon in the one tonality
of a careless self-love so long
that the grave itself
will simply be the final effort
of the same somebody using me
to express himself in a minor cadence—
his little alas but a sigh
that his composition closed so shabbily.

Hodge: And still you cannot recall,
stubborn lad that you are,
a single variation, a dissonance, a breve?

Henry: Neither can you, Hodge,
with your eye pointing forward!

Hodge: Let us try just once more again—

Henry: Folk-song of the hopeful!—

Hodge: And perhaps—

Henry: Da capo of the hopeless!

Hodge: Possibly the shade of this laurel,
itself the design of accident,
angle of sun and of tree
meeting, rounding, spreading,

will quiet your melancholy,
and some quaint caress have room to stir,
your memory mislaid?

Henry: Memory is a cupboard
I have gone to myriad times
and have returned the one time always
with relics so tedious
I find them heavier than boulders.
Since you who persist must try once again,
pray, take down the future if you can.

Hodge: Let us then sit here and wait,
and the strange, the new, may yet transpire.

Henry: You nod your head and I wag mine,
that is the difference between us:
you have verticals left in you,
I am all horizontal.

Hodge: But we are breathed into moving
in accordance with the odd,
delicately reciprocal nuance
of our one and the same—

Henry: Bassoonist!—

Hodge: You dub him lugubriously!—

Henry: Accurately!—

Hodge: Henry!

(Henry looks at Hodge. Hodge smiles. They smoke in silence. Hodge points with his pipe-stem.)

Hodge: That swan,
a white interrogation
embracing the water,
and being embraced in response—

Henry: Their eyes reflecting each other,
their bodies displacing—

Hodge: That swallow cleaving the air,
trusting his wings to the waves of ether—
Henry: And the air trusting him
with room in her body,
relinquishing just enough space
for him to fit himself into—
Hodge: Or the worm underground,
digging cylinder channels—
Henry: And the earth undulating
to the pressure of excavation—
Hodge: Caresses like these, simple Henry—
Henry: Caresses like those simpler Hodge,
have been clapped in my ear
by your credulous tongue
with such affectionate fortitude,
I'm a bell attacked by echoes
each time the sea moves.
(Hodge looks at Henry and wags his head. Henry nods and smiles. Hodge turns away.)
Henry: You also remind me of evergreens
refusing to acknowledge the seasons,
or unable to distinguish
between white flowers and snow.
You're as old and as young as romance.
Hodge: It's you who fall redundant,
you who fondle the rondo—
why not have done and call me senile?
Henry: Senility is a sling
invented by cynical youths
who envy and would rob
the old of their possessions.

Hodge: You admit possessions?—
you contradict yourself?—
Henry: My property
comprises the realization,
stripped bare of hope or hypothesis,
that I own neither things nor persons;
least of all these, myself.
Nor am I longer deluded
with even the thought of touching
a body that pirate youth would filch,
who cannot rid his blood of desire.
Hodge: Then you must be that youth,
since you crave—
Henry: A type of caress?
Hodge: How do you wriggle out of that?
(Hodge and Henry relight their pipes.)
Henry: The type of caress I crave
must have in it
no desire to make of me
aught of what it would make of itself.
It must not say to me,
"I would make of you
more of me and less of you—"
Hodge: Nor must it lure me,
by virtue of the bounty
of its body or the beauty
of its mind, to sigh,
"I would make of myself
more of you and less of me—"
Henry: I have had enough
of such juxtaposition—

Hodge: The immortal dialogue
of life and of death—
Henry: The recurrent symbol
of being and reflection—
Hodge: Of Narcissus
in love with himself—
Henry: Of God chanting a solo
to comfort His loneliness,
like an aged woman
knitting things for her children to wear
in her own image,
singing: "This is I,
and you are mine;
so wear my love as I love you."
(Pause. Henry lowers his head; so does Hodge.)
Henry: If it is
God who fashioned me,
is it He
who asks, is He pleased?
Hodge: Does my prayer,
which is His
if I'm His,
move or leave Him unmoved?
Henry: Is it He
who lifts these questions,
or am I
to blame for thinking?
Hodge: If He,
noticing me
at last, notices Himself—
what's wrong with Him?

Henry: Really,
I'm not regretting
what I am,
nor begging, make me better.
Hodge: If I
have a sense of the droll,
surely
He has one too—
Henry: Asking Himself
to pray to Himself—
that is,
if He fashioned me?
(Pause)
Hodge: Does it comfort you?
Henry: A little—for a moment.
Hodge: Farther than last time?
Henry: A tiny stretch beyond.
(They raise their heads.)
Hodge: It's still a wee mad melody—
Henry: Innocent blasphemy
of the inner
frantic to grow to the outer,
to the more than itself—
the molecule a star,
the instant universal—
the me a trifle closer
to the you that gave it life.
Hodge: Strange that we return to it!
Henry: Stranger still, we do naught but return!
(They continue smoking, Henry wagging, Hodge nodding.)
Hodge: Did you feel something stir?

Henry: Only another breeze—
Hodge: But didn't you see that cloud alter?—
Henry: The cause of the breeze—
Hodge: Caressing us?
Henry: Leaving me colder—
Hodge: Me warmer.
Henry: When the temperature in a room
is higher or lower than normal,
it is needful to open
or to shut a window—
Hodge: Which?
Henry: A west wind
urges me to shut a west window,
an east an east—that is all.
And I have known the same touch
to thrill and leave me cold,
and this monotonous heart of mine
to open and close in childish acquiescence—
Hodge: Button your coat about you—
Henry: We have no business
gadding around in the spring—
it was you who suggested it,
you with your nodding.
Hodge: It was the look of the world outdoors—
Let us try another place,
or wander back home again.
Henry: And try just once more?
Hodge: Perhaps, providing—
Henry: We are like twin philosophers,
phrase-practitioners
who argue with slender
tapering sensitive beards

which each lays persuasive hold of,
pulling first the one the other
and the other the one in turn,
till their heads collide and rebound
back to the starting-point,
with if or suppose or providing or but—

Hodge: But you have more wisdom?—

Henry: And you more happiness!
And thus the moon pursues the sun!
(Hodge touches Henry.)

Hodge: Are you angry?

Henry: Angry with you?
(They eye each other, smile faintly, and turn away.)

Henry: Your talk comes to me from afar,
though you are only an elbow away,
like rain making an arid soil
intimate with better things.
They, perhaps, are what are left me.

Hodge: If I say, I love thee
in some guise or other—
this is more than talk?

Henry: The gesture of a lonely spirit
reaching out to a lonelier.
(They methodically shake out their pipes and stuff them away. Hodge nudges Henry ever so gently. Henry tries to rise. Hodge has to aid him. They move away haltingly, Hodge's stick tapping a little in advance of Henry's, and Hodge's arm through Henry's. Henry tries to shake off Hodge, but the latter persists. They move slightly faster.)

Henry: Was it yesterday I said—
Hodge: What, Henry?
Henry: I love thee?
Hodge: In actual words, nay—
but the day before—
Henry: Then let them have been said
yesterday as well,
for if words ever fail me—
Hodge: They never fail you.
Henry: Nor you, Hodge.
(They nod together.)
Henry: Let us go silently
the next pace or two—
Hodge: As you will—
Henry: And let other things speak—
Hodge: For us?
Henry: For themselves.
(They disappear, Hodge's stick still sounding in advance of Henry's.)

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The Nation
1 9 2 2

MARTIN FEINSTEIN

IN MEMORIAM

I

When Cohen died, he prayed,
When Jones kicked in, he swore,

But I reckon it meant the same
To the guy at the golden door,
For there was a cuss in Ike's prayer, I'm afraid,
And a prayer in Jonesy's cuss. . . .
So it seemed to us.

2

There's poppies enough to go round,
And crosses to stick in the ground,
There's heaven for them that were blest,
And medals enough for the rest.

3

I remember what Ike said:
"This business has gone to my head,
It's made me as mad as a loon . . .
D'ye think it'll sizzle out soon?"

4

Eh-oh, my brother Jesus,
They rigged you up in state,
In a khaki coat and a gun to tote,
Did they think you could learn to hate?

The valleys are drowned in the morning mist,
The hill is an island of gold,
But your eyes are unstirred by the wonder, unwist,
Ah, lad, and your face is cold . . .
The armies have gathered and gone,

My buddy and I are alone,
A queer little body at that,
With a hole through the top of his hat,
A queer little soul to the last,
No fuss, just crumpled, and passed . . .

The ranks of the dead go marching by,
What can Jesus do but die?
Eh-oh, my little brother,
They rigged you up in state,
In a khaki coat and gun to tote,
But you never could learn to hate.

5

We buried Jesus on the hill,
Glory hallelujah!
The rain soaked down and the wind blew shrill
Glory hallelujah!
Cheer up, soldier, sling your gun,
What's been done can't be undone,
We'll all be buried, every one.
Glory hallelujah!

The ranks of the dead go marching by,
What can Jesus do but die?

6

You'll never see your buck no more,
O Eliza, lil' Liza Jane
He's a-struttin' through the golden door,

O Eliza, lil' Liza Jane
He's oglin' all the cherubim,
An' the Lord Hisself is a-greetin' him.
O Eliza, lil' Liza Jane

Have you ever seen a nigger's blood?
O Eliza, lil' Liza Jane
It's red as my own, an' jest as good.
O Eliza, lil' Liza Jane
I've seen it drip fr'm a slatherin' wound,
A-droppin' an' seepin' into the ground.
O Eliza, lil' Liza Jane

I saw him grin an' hold his side
O Eliza, lil' Liza Jane
A-soppin' dark with the red life-tide.
O Eliza, lil' Liza Jane
I laid him down in the mud to sleep,
An' prayed the Lord his soul to keep.
O Eliza, lil' Liza Jane

7

It took a shrapnel shell,
Spat from the jaws of hell,
To bust the color line,
Till even a fool could tell
A nigger's a man, and man's divine.

The ranks of the dead go marching by,
What can Jesus do but die?

8

"Let us pray for the souls of the slain."
That sounds all right, in the main;
No great harm done, I guess,
It'll ease us of dreariness—

The guns are plowing the earth,
This is the red dawn's birth,
And sowing a terrible seed,
And reaping the crop with speed—

Why are the guns so greedy?
Why are the reapers so needy?

Here's a guy with his guts all out,
Let's pray for him first, let us shout,
Maybe he'll hear us in time,
And turn his face from the slime . . .

Wake up, Jesus, rouse up, lad!
Wake up, brother! . . . It's too bad . . .

Or maybe he wasn't Jesus at all,
But a thief, or a pimp in a dancing hall;
That's what he was, and he offered me
Tribute of all his thievery
And the debutante whore of his dive,
If we should come out of the valley alive.

A thief, a pimp, so let him lie . . .
We are good people you and I,

You will not have aught to say,
You will not want to pray . . .

Ah, but the grass and the brambles cry:
"The ranks of the dead go marching by!"

9

It's a jolly world, if you watch the sight,
And it's man's inalienable right
To rot on a cross in Golgotha, forgot
By God and men, or break apart and rot
In a rat-invaded Flanders trench,
Contributing his carcass to the stench . . .

Now I lay me down to sleep . . .
To sleep . . .

10

The sun and the glory is this,
The rest is but *mise-en-scène,*
And if I have drawn it amiss
I'm a prattler and charlatan.

The crown and the cross and the night,
The darkness, and maybe a light . . .

11

It is not easy to forget,
The rats and the slime are with me yet.
The heavy death that burst behind,

And the burning death that walked with the wind,
The oath half uttered,
The prayer half sputtered,
The mud and the blood and the broken flesh,
These things enmesh
My heart with an unbreakable net . . .
It is not easy to forget. . . .

12

The sun is up in Jordan land,
Carry me over, Lord
The lambs are glad in Jordan land,
Carry me over, Lord
I'll meet my buddy in Jordan land.
Carry me over, Lord . . .

13

Ike and the nigger and Jones, they came from the fields of death,
Sightless and broken and stark and wet with the damp of the heath,
Dragging a cross between them, huge and heavy and black,
They had gone their way together in a blundering night attack.

And Ike said: "After the wind and the rain
Little is left of my heart but the pain."

And the nigger: "After the rain and the wind
Little is left me but eyes that are blind."

And Jones said: "After the wind and the rain
The poppies grow out of my hands again."

14

Out of my body the moss is fed,
The thorn-bush roots in my broken head,
And never the poppies so large and red,
Dust unto dust till the pain is dead . . .

15

Pack up, buddy, you've done your little bit,
One more hike an' there's glory on the top!
What's that you're sayin' . . . you're not feelin' fit? . . .
Buzzin' in your ears . . . an' thumpin' nigh to drop? . . .
Why, damn your silly soul,
If your face ain't shot off whole . . .

16

The last vigil is over,
From east to west
Leaps life's fierce lover;
Death is best,
Death is rest.

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

AVENEL GRAY

Avenel Gray at fifty had gray hair,
Gray eyes, and a gray cat—coincidence
Agreeable enough to be approved
And shared by all her neighbors; or by all
Save one, who had, in his abused esteem,
No share of it worth having. Avenel Gray
At fifty had the favor and the grace
Of thirty—the gray hair being only a jest
Of time, he reasoned, whereby the gray eyes
Were maybe twenty or maybe a thousand.
Never could he persuade himself to say
How old or young they were, or what was in them,
Or whether in the mind or in the heart
Of their possessor there had ever been,
Or ever should be, more than room enough
For the undying dead. All he could say
Would be that she was now to him a child,
A little frightened or a little vexed,
And now a sort of Miss Methusaleh,
Adept and various in obscurity
And in omniscience rather terrible—

Until she smiled and was a child again,
Seeing with eyes that had no age in them
That his were growing older. Seneca Sprague
At fifty had hair grayer, such as it was,
Than Avenel's—an atoll, as it were,
Circling a smooth lagoon of indignation,
Whereunder were concealed no treacheries
Or monsters that were perilous to provoke.

Seneca sat one Sunday afternoon
With Avenel in her garden. There was peace
And languor in the air, but in his mind
There was not either—there was Avenel;
And where she was, and she was everywhere,
There was no peace for Seneca. So today
Should see the last of him in any garden
Where a sphynx-child, with gray eyes and gray hair,
Would be the only flower that he might wish
To pluck, wishing in vain. "I'm here again,"
Seneca said, "and I'm not here alone;
You may observe that I've a guest with me
This time, Time being the guest. Scythe, glass, and all,
You have it, the whole ancient apparatus.
Time is a guest not given to long waiting,
And, in so far as you may not have known it,
I'm Destiny. For more than twenty years
My search has been for an identity
Worth Time's acknowledgment; and heretofore
My search has been but a long faltering,
Paid with an unavailing gratitude
And unconfessed encouragement from you.
What is it in me that you like so much,

And love so little? I'm not so much a monkey
As many who have had their heart's desire,
And have it still. My perishable angel,
Since neither you nor I may live forever
Like this, I'll say the folly that has fooled us
Out of our lives was never mine, but yours.
There was an understanding long ago
Between the laws and atoms that your life
And mine together were to be a triumph;
But one contingency was overlooked,
And that was a complete one. All you love,
And all you dare to love, is far from here—
Too far for me to find where I am going."

"Going?" Avenel said. "Where are you going?"
There was a frightened wonder in her eyes
Until she found a way for them to laugh:
"At first I thought you might be going to tell me
That you had found a new way to be old—
Maybe without remembering all the time
How gray we are. But when you soon began
To be so unfamiliar and ferocious—
Well, I began to wonder. I'm a woman."

Seneca sighed before he shook his head,
At Avenel: "You say you are a woman,
And I suppose you are. If you are not,
I don't know what you are; and if you are,
I don't know what you mean."

"By what?" she said.
A faint bewildered flush covered her face,

While Seneca felt within her voice a note
As near to sharpness as a voice like hers
Might have in silent hiding. "What have I done
So terrible all at once that I'm a stranger?"

"You are no stranger than you always were,"
He said, "and you are not required to be so.
You are no stranger now than yesterday,
Or twenty years ago; or thirty years
Longer ago than that, when you were born—
You and your brother. I'm not here to scare you,
Or to pour any measure of reproach
Out of a surplus urn of chilly wisdom;
For watching you to find out whether or not
You shivered swallowing it would be no joy
For me. But since it has all come to this—
Which is the same as nothing, only worse,
I am not either wise or kind enough,
It seems, to go away from you in silence.
My wonder is today that I have been
So long in finding what there was to find,
Or rather in recognizing what I found
Long since and hid with incredulities
That years have worn away, leaving white bones
Before me in a desert. All those bones,
If strung together, would be a skeleton
That once upheld a living form of hope
For me to follow until at last it fell
Where there was only sand and emptiness.
For a long time there was not even a grave—
Hope having died there all alone, you see,
And in the dark. And you, being as you are,

Inseparable from your traditions—well
I went so far last evening as to fancy,
Having no other counsellor than myself
To guide me, that you might be entertained,
If not instructed, hearing how far I wandered,
Following hope into an empty desert,
And what I found there. If we never know
What we have found, and are accordingly
Adrift upon the wreck of our invention,
We make our way as quietly to shore
As possible, and we say no more about it;
But if we know too well for our well-being
That what it is we know had best be shared
With one who knows too much of it already,
Even kindliness becomes, or may become,
A strangling and unwilling incubus.
A ghost would often help us if he could,
But being a ghost he can't. I may confuse
Regret with wisdom, but in going so far
As not impossibly to be annoying,
My wish is that you see the part you are
Of nature. When you find anomalies here
Among your flowers and are surprised at them,
Consider yourself and be surprised again;
For they and their potential oddities
Are all a part of nature. So are you,
Though you be not a part that nature favors,
And favoring, carries on. You are a monster;
A most adorable and essential monster."

He watched her face and waited, but she gave him
Only a baffled glance before there fell

So great a silence there among the flowers
That even their fragrance had almost a sound;
And some that had no fragrance may have had,
He fancied, an accusing voice of color
Which her pale cheeks now answered with another
Wherefore he gazed a while at tiger-lilies,
Hollyhocks, dahlias, asters and hydrangeas—
The generals of an old anonymous host
That he knew only by their shapes and faces.
Beyond them he saw trees; and beyond them
A still blue summer sky where there were stars
In hiding, as there might somewhere be veiled
Eternal reasons why the tricks of time
Were played like this. Two insects on a leaf
Would fill about as much of nature's eye,
No doubt, as would a woman and a man
At odds with heritage. Yet there they sat,
A woman and a man, beyond the range
Of all deceit and all philosophy
To make them less or larger than they were.
The sun might only be a spark among
Superior stars, but one could not help that.

"If a grim God that watches each of us
In turn, like an old-fashioned schoolmaster,"
Seneca said, still gazing at the blue
Beyond the trees, "no longer satisfies,
Or tortures our credulity with harps
Or fires, who knows if there may not be laws
Harder for us to vanquish or evade
Than any tyrants? Rather, we know there are;
Or you would not be studying butterflies

While I'm encouraging Empedocles
In retrospect. He was a mountain-climber
You may remember; and while I think of him,
I think if only there were more volcanoes,
More of us might be climbing to their craters
To find out what he found. You are sufficient,
You and your cumulative silences
Today, to make of his abysmal ashes
The dust of all our logic and our faith;
And since you can do that, you must have power
That you have never measured. Or, if you like,
A power too large for any measurement
Has done it for you, made you as you are,
And led me for the last time, possibly,
To bow before a phantom in your garden."
He smiled—until he saw tears in her eyes,
And then remarked, "Here comes a friend of yours.
Pyrrhus, you call him. Pyrrhus because he purrs."

"I found him reading Hamlet," Avenel said;
"By which I mean that I was reading Hamlet.
But he's an old cat now. And I'm another—
If you mean what you say, or seem to say.
If not, what in the world's name do you mean?"

He met the futile question with a question
Almost as futile and almost as old:
"Why have I been so long learning to read,
Or learning to be willing to believe
That I was learning? All that I had to do
Was to remember that your brother once
Was here, and is here still. Why have I waited—

Why have you made me wait—so long to say so?"
Although he said it kindly, and foresaw
That in his kindness would be pain, he said it—
More to the blue beyond the trees, perhaps,
Or to the stars that moved invisibly
To laws implacable and inviolable,
Than to the stricken ears of Avenel,
Who looked at him as if to speak. He waited,
Until it seemed that all the leaves and flowers,
The butterflies and the cat, were waiting also.
"Am I the only woman alive," she asked,
"Who has a brother she may not forget?
If you are here to be mysterious,
Ingenuousness like mine may disappoint you.
And there are women somewhere, certainly,
Riper for mysteries than I am yet.
You see me living always in one place,
And all alone."

"No, you are not alone,"
Seneca said: "I wish to God you were!
And I wish more that you had been so always,
And yet he has not been here for ten years
Though you've a skill to crowd your paradigms
Into a cage like that, and keep them there,
You may not yet be asking quite so much
Of others, for whom the present is not the past.
We are not all magicians; and Time himself
Who is already beckoning me away,
Would surely have been cut with his own scythe,
And long ago, if he had followed you
In all your caprioles and divagations.

You have deceived the present so demurely
That only few have been aware of it,
And you the least of all. You do not know
How much it was of you that was not you
That made me wait. And why I was so long
In seeing that it was never to be you,
Is not for you to tell me—for I know.
I was so long in seeing it was not you,
Because I would not see. I wonder, now,
If I should take you up and carry you off,
Like an addressable orang-outang,
You might forget the grave where half of you
Is buried alive, and where the rest of you,
Whatever you may believe it may be doing,
Is parlously employed." As if to save
His mistress the convention of an answer,
The cat jumped up into her lap and purred,
Folded his paws, and looked at Seneca
Suspiciously. "I might almost have done it,"
He said, "if insight and experience
Had not assured me it would do no good.
Don't be afraid. I have tried everything,
Only to be assured it was not you
That made me fail. If you were here alone,
You would not see the last of me so soon;
And even with you and the invisible
Together, maybe I might have seized you then
Just hard enough to leave you black and blue—
Not that you would have cared one way or other,
With him forever near you, and if unseen,
Always a refuge. No, I should not have hurt you.
It would have done no good—yet might perhaps

Have made me likelier to be going away
At the right time. Anyhow, damn the cat."

Seneca looked at Avenel till she smiled,
And so let loose a tear that she had held
In each of her gray eyes. "I am too old,"
She said, "and too incorrigibly alone,
For you to laugh at me. You have been saying
More nonsense in an hour than I have heard
Before in forty years. Why do you do it?
Why do you talk like this of going away?
Where would you be, and what would you be doing?
You would be like a cat in a strange house—
Like Pyrrhus here in yours. I have not had
My years for nothing; and you are not so young
As to be quite so sure that I'm a child.
And we've been friends too long."

"We have been friends
Too long," he said, "to be friends any longer.
And there you have the burden of a song
That I came here to sing this afternoon.
When I said friends you might have halted me,
For I meant neighbors."

"I know what you meant,"
Avenel answered, gazing at the sky,
And then at Seneca. "The great question is,
What made you say it? You mention powers and laws,
As if you understood them. Am I stranger
Than powers and laws that make me as I am?"

"God knows you are no stranger than you are,
For which I praise Him," Seneca said, devoutly.
"I see no need of prayer to bring to pass
For me more prodigies or more difficulties.
I cry for them no longer when I know
That you are married to your brother's ghost,
Even as you were married to your brother—
Never contending or suspecting it,
Yet married all the same. You are alone,
But only in so far as to my eyes
The sight of your beloved is unseen.
Why should I come between you and your ghost,
Whose hand is always chilly on my shoulder,
Drawing me back whenever I go forward?
I should have been acclaimed stronger than he
Before he died, but he can twist me now,
And I resign my dream to his dominion.
And if by chance of an uncertain urge
Of weariness or pity you might essay
The stranglings of a twofold loyalty,
The depth and length and width of my estate,
Measured magnanimously, would be but that
Of half a grave. I'd best be rational,
I'm saying therefore to myself today,
And leave you quiet. I can originate
No reason larger than a leucocyte
Why you should not, since there are two of you,
Be tranquil here together till the end."

"You would not tell me this if it were true,
And I, if it were true, should not believe it,"
Said Avenel, stroking slowly with cold hands

The cat's warm coat. "But I might still be vexed—
Yes, even with you; and that would be a pity.
It may be well for you to go away—
Or for a while—perhaps. I have not heard
Such an unpleasant nonsense anywhere
As this of yours. I like you, Seneca,
But not when you bring Time and Destiny,
As now you do, for company. When you come
Some other day, leave your two friends outside.
We have gone well without them for so long
That we shall hardly be tragedians now,
Not even if we may try; and we have been
Too long familiar with our differences
To quarrel—or to change."

Avenel smiled
At Seneca with gray eyes wherein were drowned
Inquisitive injuries, and the gray cat yawned
At him as he departed with a sigh
That answered nothing. He went slowly home,
Imagining, as a fond improvisation,
That waves huger than Andes or Sierras
Would soon be overwhelming, as before,
A ship that would be sunk for the last time
With all on board, and far from Tilbury Town.

···()···

Poetry
1 9 2 3

LOLA RIDGE

THE FIFTH-FLOOR WINDOW

Walls . . . iridescent with eyes
That stare into the courtyard
At the still thing lying
In the turned-back snow:
Stark precipices of walls,
With a foam of white faces
Lathering their stone lips—
Jabbering, craning
Faces of the shawled women
The walls pour forth without aim
Under the vast pallor of the sky.

They point at the fifth-floor window
And whisper one to the other:
"It's hard on a man out of work—
And the mother gone out of his door
With a younger lover. . . ."

The blanched morning stares
In like a face flattened against the pane
Where the little girl used to cry all day

With a feeble and goading cry.
Her father says she fell . . . with his eyes at bay
Before the vague question of the light.
Between his twitching lips
A stump of cigarette
Smolders . . . like a burning root.

Only the wind was abroad
In high cold hours
Of the icy and sightless night
With back to the stars—
Night growing white and still as a pillar of salt,
And the snow mushing without sound—
When something hurtled through the night
And drifted, like a larger snow-flake,
In the trek of the blind snow
That stumbled over it in heaps.
Only the white-furred wind
Pawed at the fifth-floor window
And nosed cigarette-butts on the sill:
Till the window closed down softly
On the silvery fleece of wind
That tore and left behind its flying fringes.

Now the wind
Down the valley of the tenements
Sweeps in weakened rushes,
And meddles with the clothes-lines
Where little white pinafores sway stiffly
Like dead geese.
The women hurry shivering indoors.
Over the back yards,

That are laid out smooth and innocent as a corpse
Under the seamless snow,
The sky is a vast ash-pit
Where the buried sun
Rankles in a livid spot.

···()···

The Nation
1 9 2 3

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

KING DAVID

I

David sang to his hooknosed harp:
The Lord God is a jealous god!
His violent vengeance is swift and sharp!
And the Lord is King above all gods!

"Blest be the Lord, through years untold,
The Lord Who has blessed me a thousand fold!

"Cattle and concubines, corn and hives
Enough to last me a dozen lives.

"Plump, good women with noses flat,
Marrowful blessings, weighty and fat.

"I wax in His peace like a pious gourd,
The Lord God is a pleasant God,
Break mine enemy's jaw, O Lord!
For the Lord is King above all gods!"

His hand dropped slack from the tunable strings,
A sorrow came on him—a sorrow of Kings.

A sorrow sat on the arm of his throne,
An eagle sorrow with claws of stone.

"I am merry, yes, when I am not thinking,
But life is nothing but eating and drinking.

"I can shape my psalms like daggers of jade,
But they do not shine like the first I made.

"I can harry the heathen from North to South,
But no hot taste comes into my mouth.

"My wives are comely as long-haired goats,
But I would not care if they cut their throats!

"Where are the maids of the desert tents
With lips like flagons of frankincense?

"Where is Jonathan? Where is Saul?
The captain-towers of Zion wall?

"The trees of cedar, the hills of Nod,
The Kings, the running lions of God?

"Their words were a writing in golden dust,
Their names are myrrh in the mouths of the just.

"The sword of the slayer could never divide them—
Would God I had died in battle beside them!"

The Lord looked down from a thunder-clap.
(The Lord God is a crafty God.)
He heard the strings of the shrewd harp snap.
(The Lord Who is King above all gods.)

He pricked the king with an airy thorn,
It burnt in his body like grapes of scorn.

The eyelids roused that had drooped like lead.
David lifted his great, tired head.

The thorn stung at him, a fiery bee,
"The world is wide. I will go and see
From the roof of my haughty palace," said he.

II

Bathsheba bathed on her vine-decked roof.
(The Lord God is a mighty God.)
Her body glittered like mail of proof.
(And the Lord is King above all gods.)

Her body shimmered, tender and white
As the flesh of lilies in candlelight.

King David forgot to be old or wise.
He spied on her bathing with sultry eyes.

A breath of spice came into his nose.
He said, "Her breasts are like two young roes."

His eyes were bright with a crafty gleam.
He thought, "Her body is soft as cream."

He straightened himself like an unbent bow
And called a servant and bade him go.

III

Uriah the Hittite came to his Lord,
Dusty with war as a well-used sword.

A close, trim man like a belt, well-buckled;
A jealous gentleman, hard to cuckold.

David entreated him, soft and bland,
Offered him comfits from his own hand,

Drank with him deep till his eyes grew red,
And laughed in his beard as he went to bed.

The days slipped by without hurry or strife,
Like apple-parings under a knife.
And still Uriah kept from his wife.

Lean fear tittered through David's psalm,
"This merry husband is far too calm!"

David sent for Uriah then,
They greeted each other like pious men.

"Thou hast borne the battle, the dust and the heat.
Go down to thy house and wash thy feet!"

Uriah frowned at the words of the king.
His brisk, hard voice had a leaden ring.

"While the hosts of God still camp in the field,
My house to me is a garden sealed.

"How shall I rest while the arrow yet flies?
The dust of the war is still in my eyes."

David spoke with his lion's roar.
"If Peace be a bridle that rubs you sore,
You shall fill your belly with blood and war!"

Uriah departed, calling him kind.
His eyes were serpents in David's mind.

He summoned a captain, a pliable man.
"Uriah the Hittite shall lead the van.

"In the next assault when the fight roars high,
And the Lord God is a hostile God,
Retire from Uriah that he may die.
For the Lord is King above all gods."

The messenger came while King David played
The friskiest ditty ever made.

"News, O King, from our dubious war!
The Lord of Hosts hath prevailed once more!

"His foes are scattered like chirping sparrows,
Their kings lie breathless, feathered with arrows.

"Many are dead of your captains tall.
Uriah the Hittite was first to fall."

David turned from the frolicsome strings
And rent his clothes for the death of kings.

Yet, as he rent them, he smiled for joy,
The sly, wide smile of a wicked boy.

"The powerful grace of the Lord prevails!
He has cracked Uriah between His nails!

"His blessings are mighty, they shall not cease!
And my days henceforth shall be days of peace!"

His mind grew tranquil, smoother than fleece.
He rubbed his body with scented grease,
And his days thenceforward were days of peace.

His days were fair as the flowering lime
—For a little time, for a little time.

And Bathsheba lay in his breast like a dove,
A vessel of amber, made for love.

v

When Bathsheba was great with child,
(The Lord God is a jealous God!)
Portly and meek as a moon grown mild
(The Lord is King above all gods!)

Nathan, the prophet, wry and dying,
Preached to the king like a locust crying:

"Hearken awhile to a doleful thing!
There were two men in thy land, O King!

"One was rich as a gilded ram.
One had one treasure, a poor ewe-lamb.

"Rich man wasted his wealth like spittle.
Poor man shared with his lamb spare victual.

"A traveler came to the rich man's door.
'Give me to eat, for I hunger sore!'

"Rich man feasted him fatly, true,
But the meat that he gave him was fiends' meat too,
Stolen and roasted, the poor man's ewe!

"Hearken, my lord, to a deadly thing!
What shall be done with these men, O King?"

David hearkened, seeing it plain,
His heart grew heavy with angry pain:
"Show me the rich man, that he be slain!"

Nathan barked as a jackal can.
"Just, O King! And thou art the man!"

David rose as the thunders rise
When someone in Heaven is telling lies.
But his eyes were weaker than Nathan's eyes.

His huge bulk shivered like quaking sod,
Shoulders bowing to Nathan's rod,
Nathan, the bitter apple of God.

His great voice shook like a runner's, spent,
"My sin hath found me! Oh, I repent!"

Answered Nathan, that talkative Jew:
"For many great services, comely and true,
The Lord of Mercy shall pardon you.

"But the child in Bathsheba, come of your seed,
Shall sicken and die like a blasted weed!"

David groaned when he heard him speak.
The painful tears ran hot on his cheek.

Ashes he cast on his kingly locks.
All night long he lay on the rocks.

Beseeching his Lord with a howling cry:
"O Lord God, O my jealous God,

Be kind to the child that it may not die,
For Thou art King above all gods!"

VI

Seven long nights he lay there, howling,
A lion wounded, moaning and growling.

Seven long midnights, sorrowing greatly,
While Sin, like a dead man, embraced him straitly.

Till he was abased from his lust and pride
And the child was born and sickened and died.

He rose at last. It was ruddy Day.
And his sin like water had washed away.

He cleansed and anointed, took fresh apparel,
And worshiped the Lord in a tuneful carol.

His servants, bearing the child to bury,
Marveled greatly to see him so merry.

He spoke to them mildly as mid-May weather:
"The child and my sin are perished together.

"He is dead, my son. Though his whole soul yearn to me,
I must go to him, he may not return to me.

"Why should I sorrow for what was pain?
A cherished grief is an iron chain."

He took up his harp, the sage old chief.
His heart felt clean as a new green leaf.

His soul smelt pleasant as rain-wet clover.
"I have sinned and repented and that's all over.

"In his dealings with heathen, the Lord is hard.
But the humble soul is his spikenard."

His wise thoughts fluttered like doves in the air.
"I wonder is Bathsheba still so fair?

"Does she weep for the child that our sin made perish?
I must comfort my ewe-lamb, comfort and cherish.

"The justice of God is honey and balm.
I will soothe her heart with a little psalm."

He went to her chamber, no longer sad,
Walking as light as a shepherd lad.

He found her weeping, her garments rent,
Trodden like straw by God's punishment.
He solaced her out of his great content.

Being but woman, a while she grieved,
But at last she was comforted, and conceived.

Nine months later she bore him a son.
(The Lord God is a mighty God!)
The name of that child was SOLOMON.
He was God's tough staff till his days were run!
(And the Lord is King above all gods!)

···()···

Contemporary Verse
1 9 2 3

SARA TEASDALE

THE DARK CUP

I

MAY DAY

A delicate fabric of bird-song
  Floats in the air,
The smell of wet wild earth
  Is everywhere.

Red small leaves of the maple
  Are clenched like a hand,
Like girls at their first communion
  The pear trees stand.

Oh I must pass nothing by
  Without loving it much,
The raindrop try with my lips,
  The grass with my touch;

For how can I be sure
  I shall see again
The world on the first of May
  Shining after the rain?

II

"THE DREAMS OF MY HEART"

The dreams of my heart and my mind pass,
  Nothing stays with me long,
But I have had from a child
  The deep solace of song;

If that should ever leave me,
  Let me find death, and stay
With things whose tunes are played out and forgotten
  Like the rain of yesterday.

III

BELLS

At six o'clock of an autumn dusk
  With the sky in the west a rusty red,
The bells of the mission down in the valley
  Cry out that the day is dead.

The first star shines as sharp as steel—
  Why am I suddenly so cold?
Three bells, each with a separate sound,
  Clang in the valley, wearily tolled.

Bells in Venice, bells at sea,
  Bells in the valley, heavy and slow—
There is no place over the crowded world
  Where I can forget that the days go.

IV

IN THE END

All that could never be said,
  All that could never be done,
Wait for us at last
  Somewhere back of the sun.

All the heart broke to forego
  Shall be ours without pain,
Taken as lightly as girls
  Pluck flowers after rain.

And when they are ours in the end,
  Perhaps after all,
The skies will not open for us,
  Nor heaven be there at our call.

V

"A LITTLE WHILE"

A little while when I am gone
  My life will live in music after me,
As spun foam lifted and borne on
  After the wave is lost in the full sea.

Awhile these nights and days will burn
  In song, with the brief frailty of foam,
Living in light before they turn
  Back to the nothingness that is their home.

DAVID MORTON

THE TOWN
(For Morristown, N. J.)

I

DEDICATION

These morning streets, the lawns of windy grass,
  And spires that wear the sunlight like a crown,
These, and the square where happy people pass:
  The living soul that lights the little Town—
These have been shining beauty for my mind,
  And joy and friendship and a tale to tell;
And these have been a presence that is kind,
  A quiet music and a healing well.

Men who were lovers in the olden time,
  Who praised the beauty of bright hair and brow,
And left a little monument of rhyme,—
  Wrought not more tenderly that I would, now,
To turn these changing syllables of praise
  For her whose quiet beauty fills my days.

II

THE DEAD

I think those townsmen, sleeping on the hill,
  Are never careless how the Town may fare,
But jealous of her living beauty still,
  Her ways and worth are things for which they care:
For shuttered house and lawns of tender grass,
  And how the streets, tree-bordered all and cool,
Are still a pleasant way for folk to pass:
  Merchant and priest and children home from school.

I cannot doubt that they are pleased to see
  Their planted elms grown dearer year by year:
Their living witness unto such as we....
  And they are less regretful when they hear
Some name we speak, some tale we tell again,
  Of days when they were warm and living men.

III

TRANSFORMATION

The way of Spring with little steepled towns
  Is such a shy, transforming sorcery
Of special lights and swift, incredible crowns,
  That grave men wonder how such things may be;
No friendly spire, no daily-trodden way
  But somehow alters in the April air,—
Grown dearer still on some enchanted day,
  For shining garments they have come to wear.

The way the spring comes to our Town is such
That something quickens in the hearts of men,
Turning them lovers at its subtle touch,
Till they must lift their heads, again . . . again . . .
As lovers do, with frank adoring eyes,
Where the long street of lifted steeples lies.

IV

THE TOWNSMAN

Here would I leave some subtle part of me,
A moving presence through the friendly Town,
Abiding still and eager still to be
Where goodly folk pass daily up and down:
An essence stirring on the ways they fare,
Haunting the drifted sunlight where they go,
Till one might mark a Something on the air,
Most near and kind . . . though why, he would not know;

Happy, if it may chance, where two shall meet,
Pausing to pass the friendly idle word,
In the hushed twilight of the evening street,
I might stand by, a secret, silent Third. . . .
Most happy listener if I hear them tell
How with the Town—and them—it still is well.

the savage's romance,
accreted where we need the space for commerce—
the centre of the wholesale fur trade,
starred with tepees of ermine and peopled with foxes,
the long guard-hairs waving two inches beyond the body
of the pelt;
the ground dotted with deer-skins—white with white spots
"as satin needle-work in a single colour may carry a varied
pattern—"
and blankets of eagles' down,
submarine forest upon submarine forest of tropical
seaweed.
It is a far cry from the "queen full of jewels"
and the beau with the muff,
from the gilt coach shaped like a perfume bottle,
to the conjunction of the Monongahela and the Allegheny
and the scholastic philosophy of the wilderness,
to combat which one must stand outside and laugh
since to go in is to be lost.

It is not the dime-novel exterior,
Niagara Falls, the calico horses, and the war canoe;
it is not that "if the fur is not finer than such as one sees
others wear,
one would rather be without it—"
that estimated in raw meat and berries, we could feed the
universe;
it is not the atmosphere of ingenuity,
the otter, the beaver, the puma skins
without shooting-irons or dogs;
it is not the plunder,
it is the access to experience.

A GRAVE

Man, looking into the sea—
taking the view from those who have as much right to it
as you have to it yourself—
it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing
but you cannot stand in the middle of this:
the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.
The firs stand in a procession—each with an emerald
turkey-foot at the top—
reserved as their contours, saying nothing;
repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic
of the sea;
the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.
There are others besides you who have worn that look—
whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer
investigate them
for their bones have not lasted:

men lower their nets, unconscious of the fact that they are
desecrating a grave,
and row quickly away—the blades of the oars
moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there
were no such thing as death.
The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx—
beautiful under networks of foam,
and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of
the seaweed;
the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-
calls as heretofore—
the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in
motion beneath them
and the ocean, under the pulsation of lighthouses and noise
of bell-buoys,
advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in
which dropped things are bound to sink—
in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition
nor consciousness.

...()...

Poetry
1 9 2 4

AMANDA BENJAMIN HALL

THE BALLAD OF THE THREE SONS

A rich man is a man
With tall sons by his side,

Lads long enough of limb to take
A corn-field at a stride!

A man with full-grown sons
Should be watchful, he should keep
Bright and burning to protect them—
Lads grow tired . . . they must sleep . . .

As a mother at her breast
Holds the nursing infant's life,
He should trust them to no neighbor,
Nor his own God, nor his wife.

My wife bore me two sons—
I held my head high;
Knowing my sons would live for me
When I should come to die. . . .

My wife she bore a third,
But the third was torture-limbed—
Not like the two whose trunks were straight
As trees, and neatly trimmed!

Orrin and John were keen,
But 'twas the Lord's grim pleasure,
In weighing out a mind for him,
To give poor Clyde half measure,

And so dilute our healthy stock.
Eyes vacant as his wit,
He lived a feeble useless fool;
'Twas pain to see him sit,

Dull, in his mother's kitchen
Beside her chimney nook.
Though years went past he could not tell
The letters in a book,

But loved the common meadow flowers,
And he would finger these
Until they wilted in his hand
Between his crooked knees;

And had strange fancy for the birds,
And notionally kept
A little winter sparrow once—
And when it died he wept....

But though the fibre of his wits
Was poor and loosely woven,
His mother taught him tirelessly
While the bread was in the oven,

Giving him all her love,
With scarcely thought for others.
It almost seemed that she begrudged
The hale health of his brothers,

And hated those who pitied her,
Intending to be kind.
Though only she could find the way
Through turnings of his mind,

She held him as her one ewe lamb,
This creature hardly human,

Because he stayed at home with her—
May God forgive the woman!

She said, "Of all the sons I've reared
I've but one loving son;
The others went too soon from me—
'Twas run, run, run,

"As little tads, and when they grew
And were too old for play,
Their father set his hands on them
And bore them both away.

"Now Orrin and John grow soft in spring
As the down of the pussywillow,
And soon the mother'll be forgot
For a wife's head on the pillow!

"But gentle Clyde will stay with me,
Long in his kitchen seat,
And I will pour his drink for him,
And I will cut his meat. . . ."

A woman's ravings! Peace to her—
I had my goodly yield,
My lovely sons who laughed all day
And sweated in the field.

Broad backs bent until they straightened,
Dripping and immense;
They had cheerful hands for milking
Or for making fence.

They knew sheep and how to cross them,
With the proper choice of rams.
In the lonely nights of April,
When the ewes would drop their lambs,

They were skilful; at the shearing
Cool to calm the frightened beast
Till, as naked as a baby
Out of blanket, it was fleeced!

And the same way with our cattle,
Working hard and nothing halving....
O my wise sons, O my helpers,
How I miss you at the calving!

Sweet as cider from the mill,
But strong as cider aged,
Ever hearty and unbeaten
In the battles that they waged,

They could set maids' hearts aflutter
At the yearly county fair;
And folk did not mean our oxen
When they whispered, "What a pair!"

Beautiful as grain at harvest
Were my gallant reapers!
Night fell suddenly upon them—
They were heavy sleepers....

Safe and sound I left them,
Coming dark, to go

To the town for early market
In the morning. You should know

That their bed was in the attic
Of the house long built,
Where they lay beneath the rafter
And their grandmother's patched quilt.

It was autumn, nearing winter,
And the ground all hoary.
Crazy Clyde was resting ill
In the second storey,

Plagued by some dim recollection
Of a mischief he had done
Late that evening, with two live coals
He had lifted just for fun

From the stove, his mother busy
With the dishes, till she turned
And helped him hobble up to bed,
Unknowing that they burned

Like two red eyes into the floor.
Hours later she awoke:
The moon shone, but the room was grey
And ghostly with the smoke,

As if a monstrous spider wove
A web. She saw it growing.
She says she heard a horrid sound
That was the north wind blowing....

And then, God help her, her one thought
And only living dread
Was for the idiot who slept
Close by in his small bed!

She roused him. When she had him up
Her frenzy made him shudder.
He fought her. She'd no way to steer
That brain without a rudder.

Resisting with a stubborn will
What she would have him do,
He feared and knew not what he feared:
She beat him black and blue,

And anger made her over-strong
And terror made her wise—
If once she had him on the floor
The cripple could not rise....

And so she schemed to save the thing
She should have left to die.
My sons lay dreaming overhead—
The house was high,
And very old and dry....

The flames climbed upward step by step
As she went down the stair—
A lioness with her strange whelp
Dangling by the hair,

A worthless pulp of flesh and blood,
Torn as in a rack;
And when she dragged him through the door
He fought her to go back!

She tore her night-gown into strips
And, naked to the skin,
She tied him to an orchard tree.
Then her lamenting din

Ascended with the fire until
It reached the two above,
The luckless sleepers in their bed
Her afterthought of love!

The winding stair was like a flue,
And deeper than a well,
When down they plunged through smoke and flame
As spirits do to hell....

Next morning nothing much remained
To mark that midnight revel,
The pickets smoking in the gate,
The ground level....

My wife she met me in the road,
She wrung her hands and raved.
I had two golden sons and great
I saw what she had saved

To be my son for all my days,
My heavy heart to cumber

In this rough hut we call our home.
A man needs more than lumber,

Mortar and tiles to build a house—
He needs his warm hopes too!
The half-wit fills his mother's days
Just as he used to do—

For fatherhood and motherhood
Are separate strange things....
My wife she tends the lad she saved,
And when he smiles, she sings.

My wife cries, "Shame on your hard heart,
And you his lawful sire!"
I answer her, "I had two sons—
They perished in the fire."

The mother's love is for the weak
She cannot hope to cure,
But the father's love is for the strong
Who make his stock endure.

I had two lovely sons,
I was a man endowed;
But the sun will rise tomorrow
And find my fields unplowed.

The sun will rise tomorrow
And peer in at the door,
And I will tell him that my lads
Were never late before....

I'll tell him by this time last year
The plowing had been done.
My wife she has a living child
But I have none.

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Poetry
1 9 2 4

AMY LOWELL

EVELYN RAY

No decent man will cross a field
Laid down to hay, until its yield

Is cut and cocked, yet there was the track
Going in from the lane and none coming back.

But that was afterwards; before,
The field was smooth as a sea off shore

On a shimmering afternoon, waist-high
With bent, and red top, and timothy,

Lush with oat grass and tall fescue,
And the purple green of Kentucky blue.

A noble meadow, so broad each way
It took three good scythes to mow in a day.

Just where the field broke into a wood
A knotted old catalpa stood,

And in the old catalpa-tree
A cat-bird sang immoderately.

The sky above him was round and big
And its centre seemed just over his twig.

The earth below him was fresh and fair,
With the sun's long fingers everywhere.

The cat-bird perched where a great leaf hung,
And the great leaf tilted, and flickered, and swung.

The cat-bird sang with a piercing glee
Up in the sun-specked catalpa-tree.

He sang so loud and he sang so long
That his ears were drowned in his own sweet song.

But the little peering leaves of grass
Shook and sundered to let them pass,

To let them pass, the men who heard
Nothing the grass said, nothing the bird.

Each man was still as a shining stone,
Each man's head was a buzzing bone

Wherein two words screeched in and out
Like a grinding saw with its turn about:

"Evelyn Ray" each stone man said,
And the words cut back and forth through his head,
And each of them wondered if he were dead.

The cat-bird sang with his head cocked up
Gazing into the sky's blue cup.

The grasses waved back into place,
The sun's long fingers stroked each face,

Each grim cold face that saw no sun.
And the feet led the faces on and on.

They stopped beside the catalpa-tree,
Said one stone face to the other, "See!"

The other face had nothing to say,
Its lips were frozen on "Evelyn Ray."

They laid their hats in the tall green grass
Where the crickets and grasshoppers pass and pass.

They hung their coats in the crotch of a pine
And paced five feet in an even line.

They measured five paces either way,
And the saws in their heads screeched "Evelyn Ray."

The cat-bird sang so loud and clear
He heard nothing at all, there was nothing to hear.

Even the swish of long legs pushing
Through grass had ceased, there was only the hushing

Of a windless wind in the daisy tops,
And the jar stalks make when a grasshopper hops.

Every now and then a bee boomed over
The black-eyed Susans in search of clover,

And crickets shrilled as crickets do:
One-two. One-two.

The cat-bird sang with his head in the air,
And the sun's bright fingers poked here and there,

Past leaf, and branch, and needle, and cone.
But the stone men stood like men of stone.

Each man lifted a dull stone hand
And his fingers felt like weaving sand,

And his feet seemed standing on a ball
Which tossed and turned in a waterfall.

Each man heard a shot somewhere
Dropping out of the distant air.

But the screaming saws no longer said
"Evelyn Ray," for the men were dead.

I often think of Evelyn Ray.
What did she do, what did she say.
Did she ever chance to pass that way?

I remember it as a lovely spot
Where a cat-bird sang. When he heard the shot,
Did he fly away? I have quite forgot.

When I went there last, he was singing again
Through a little fleeting misty rain,
And pine-cones lay where they had lain.

This is the tale as I heard it when
I was young from a man who was three score and ten.
A lady of clay and two stone men.

A pretty problem is here, no doubt,
If you have a fancy to work it out:
What happens to stone when clay is about?

Muse upon it as long as you will,
I think myself it will baffle your skill,
And your answer will be what mine is—nil.

But every sunny Summer's day
I am teased with the thought of Evelyn Ray,

Poor little image of painted clay.
And Heigh-o! I say.
What if there be a judgment-day?

What if all religions be true,
And Gabriel's trumpet blow for you
And blow for them—what will you do?

Evelyn Ray, will you rise alone?
Or will your lovers of dull grey stone
Pace beside you through the wan

Twilight of that bitter day
To be judged as stone and judged as clay,
And no one to say the judgment nay?

Better be nothing, Evelyn Ray,
A handful of buttercups that sway
In the wind for a children's holiday.

For earth to earth is the best we know,
Where the good blind worms rush to and fro
Turning us into the seeds which grow,

And lovers and ladies are dead indeed,
Lost in the sap of a flower seed.
Is this, think you, a sorry creed?

Well, be it so, for the world is wide
And opinions jostle on every side.
What has always hidden will always hide.

And every year when the fields are high
With oat grass, and red top, and timothy,
I know that a creed is the shell of a lie.

Peace be with you, Evelyn Ray,
And to your lovers, if so it may,
For earth made stone and earth made clay

...()...

The Nation
1 9 2 4

SCUDDER MIDDLETON

JEZEBEL

We know she lives upon that thorny hill,
We see her lights and watch her chimneys spark—
But her we have not seen. The old wives say,
Remembering when she came, her ways were dark,
And that her only name is Jezebel.
One gray idiot tells his tale of love,
Mixing her beauty with the grass of May.

Perhaps we idly wonder if she wore
A flower in her hair, or if the beat
Of her small heels upon the sidewalk stone
Was heard at midnight through our lamplit street;
Or why it was she went away to live,
With all her perfumed satin and her lace,
In that wind-beaten, far-off place, alone.

We never wonder more of Jezebel.
We have our work to do and God is hard.
Serving the wheels or guiding straight the plow
Leaves little thought of frankincense and nard.
Yet, she is like deep waters of the Spring

Running along our minds; down at the roots,
The miracle that makes the April bough.

No man goes near that house above the town.
No man has seen her shadow on the blind,
Though through the night, till dawn, the tallow drips
But, sometimes, when the chains of duty bind,
Because we reach too eagerly for Heaven,
Sometimes, like little bells within our sleep,
It seems we hear the music of her lips.

Then we have left what we most dearly love,
And, momentary lords of Heaven and Hell,
We have gone up through briars and the night,
And seen the secret face of Jezebel.
There, in that still confessional where she waits,
We all have had the blessing of her breast,
As over us she leaned to blow the light.

Up in that room above our godly town,
We have denied the vows we bleed to keep,
We have torn off the lying masks we wear,
And sown without the fear that we must reap.
The young, the pious, and the old alike
Have been glad penitents upon her heart—
She has absolved us by her kisses, there.

She has forgiven us and let us go,
And we have wakened in our homes again,
To hear the breathing of an earthly bride,
To watch the real world blooming on the pane.
The field, the wheel, the desk have called once more,

And we have stooped to pick the slender threads
By which we weave the patterns of our pride.

That day, we do not bargain with the sun,
Or curb our pride because one angel fell—
We are the wilful brotherhood who sing!
We bend, without a thought of Jezebel,
Above our work, no longer do we drudge;
We are, awhile, like happy, armored men
God's searching whip of anger cannot sting!

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Poetry
1 9 2 5

LEONORA SPEYER

THE BALLAD OF A LOST HOUSE

I

Hungry Heart, Hungry Heart, where have you been?
I've been to a town where lives a Queen.

Hungry Heart, Hungry Heart, what did you there?
I ran all the way to a certain Square.

Hungry Heart, say what you did that for.
To find a street and a certain door;
And there I knocked my knuckles sore.

II

That was a foolish thing to do,
Alone in the night the hours through,

Gaping there like a chalky clown,
At a stranger door that had been your own.

Where was your pluck and where your pride?
They both were there, and love beside;
And suddenly the door swung wide.

I heard the sound of a violin
That seemed to bid me enter in:

For a fiddle's a key for many a lock,
And will open a door though it's built in rock.

III

Tell me, Hungry, what did you see?
A lighted hall where friends made free;

I trod with them a well-known stair . . .
How did you dare, Heart! How did you dare?

For a frowning face you may trust and like,
But who shall say when a smile will strike?

IV

Up the oaken stair went I,
And all made way to let me by.

Some reached a hand and some looked down,
But I never saw their smile nor frown.

I never saw familiar things
That sought me with quaint beckonings:

The carven Saints in postures mild,
Kind Virgins with the Heavenly Child,

Ladies and Knights in tapestries—
I never saw nor looked at these.

Only the Christ from a canvas dim,
Drooping there on His leafless Limb—
He looked at me and I looked at Him.

v

Where did you go, old Unafraid?
Up to a place where children played.
The happy hubbub the small three made!—

Patter and prattle, and toys and games,
Dolls in rows with curious names,

Voices lifted like high thin tunes,
Lively suppers with square-tipped spoons:

Where should I go but up the stairs
To the welcome I knew was waiting there?

But all was still, as only can be
A long deserted nursery;
And never a sound to succor me.

VI

So I turned to a room where a woman slept
In a gay gold bed, and near I crept,

And lingered and listened: O anguished morn,
O fluty cry of a babe new-born,
Louder than trumpeting Gabriel's horn!

O sea of Life, with love for a chart . . .
On with the tale, old Hungry Heart!

VII

On with the tale, and on to a door
Where a man had passed to pass no more:

A quiet man with a quiet strength,
And over the threshold his shadow's length

Lay like an answer for Time to weigh;
And the dust from his feet spread thick and gray.

And I thought: Well shaken! Let friend or foe
Sweep up the dust an it please them so;

Let Lord and Valet tend to the room;
Lady and House-maid, here with the broom!

Bid Town and Tattle see to it too
That the windows be washed of the mud they threw.

Dust and ashes of what has been!
Sweep the house clean. And keep it clean.

VIII

I thought to curse, but strange, a prayer
Rose to my lips as I stood there.

And this my praying: Now all good cheer
To him who sleeps where slept my dear;
For the sake of the good dreams once dreamed here.

IX

Back to the stair and down I sped,
Passing a great room table-spread;

Passing, but pausing as housewives do,
Judging the viands that came to view;

Trusting the sauce was tuned to the meat,
The wine well cooled and the pudding sweet;

Pausing, but passing . . .
Stay, Heart of mine,
What of the guests? For I divine
Their looks were grand and their manners fine?

X

A goodly company, I'll admit,
And some had beauty and some had wit . . .

And some you loved?
Well, what of it?

And some loved you?
Perhaps; perhaps:
With linen napkins in their laps;

With cups that foamed, and piled-up plates—
They loved me with a hundred hates.

They hated in such lovely ways,
With laughter, singing, kisses, praise—

How could I know? How could I know?
Hungry Heart, Hungry Heart, cry not so!

XI

But as I lingered watching them,
I felt a tugging at my hem—

My little dog was cowering there,
A glassy terror in its stare.

My veins turned ice: O smacking lips,
O dainty greedy finger-tips!

'Twas bones of Hungry Heart they ate,
Broken and boiled and delicate,

Platter on platter the board along.
And as they supped they sang a song—

An ancient ardent melody
About a lady passing by
Whom they must love until they die.

XII

And as they drank I saw the wine,
It never came from ripened vine,

It never was brewed in tub or vat,
Knew web of spider or squeak of rat;
But it knows their thirst and it pours for that.

A thirsty stream that none may gauge,
That none shall slake though the stream assuage—

Of wine the very counterpart,
Out of the side of Hungry Heart.

And mixed with the toast, a violin,
Mellow and merry above the din,
Held shoulder high 'neath a woman's chin.

XIII

Hungry Heart, come, make haste, make haste,
Out of the house of hopes laid waste,

Out of the town of teeth laid bare
Under its smiling debonair!

Wait not, weep not, get you gone—
Better the stones to rest upon,

The wind and the rain for a roof secure,
Hyssop and tares for your nouriture!
These shall endure. These shall endure.

XIV

I got me gone. On stumbling feet
I reached the stair and I found the street;

The door slammed to with an iron scream,
And behind it lay the end of a dream.

Behind it lifted barren walls,
And I thought of a play when the curtain falls
On a comedy written of shrouds and palls.

XV

Hungry Heart, Hungry Heart, what did you then?
I fell on my knees and I cried Amen!
But now and again . . . now and again . . .

I come to the door in the dead of night,
I wander the rooms till the panes are white—

A landlord ghost! Aye, one who knows
His lease outlived with the cock that crows,
A wraith content that contented goes—

Goes at the cry of the bird unseen
Calling the friends of what has been.

And some it names lie sleeping near—
Ah, wake them not, friend Chanticleer!

XVI

Three times it calls the end of the dream,
And still I return, for still I seem

To comfort a house that lives aloof
From all that live beneath its roof.

I must return!—to dispossess
Those bartered walls of loneliness.

Mortar and brick and iron and bole,
Where all may pass who pay their toll—
The husk of a house that has lost its soul.

XVII

For out of that house went its soul with me,
Running and calling after me

To bear me faithful company
Over a clear and quickening sea.

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Poetry
1 9 2 5

RALPH CHEEVER DUNNING

THE FOUR WINDS

MY GARDEN

The four winds pile the colored leaves
About the house where no one lives.
And must these verses count for sheaves—
The windfalls that my garden gives?

My garden has a wall as high
As any wall of Babylon,
And only things with wings shall spy
The fruit therein or feed thereon.

But if the wind should lend you wings,
The stars will lend you eyes to see,
Among imperishable things,
The Sapphic apple on its tree.

And orchids likewise snarl and chide
In jungles under skies too blue,
Whose scarlet trumpets still may hide
A Sodomitish dream or two.

And trees by night make shadows black
With many a long invoking arm,
And lovers' sneaky ghosts come back
To see if kisses still can charm.

And from an upper chamber shines
A red light over dark and damp—
A smoky devil there reclines
Whose symbols are the pipe and lamp.

Walk softly in my garden then
Nor wake the snake or sacred dove;
And if your faith be not in men
Still let your talisman be love.

BITTER SWEET

Once in the soil of hell,
Dropped by what hands who knows,
The seed of a lily fell,
Took root and rose.

There amid agonies
Spread she her shining core,
Unto sad memories
Adding one more.

Thus for my punishment
Once in my heart so wild
Rose the sweet devil-sent
Love of a child.

Gathered all ghosts of dead
Loves that I used to kiss:
"Why did you not," they said,
"Love me like this?"

IN THE SNOW

The wind blows cold in every street,
But chiefly down the one I walk.
He follows now my chilly feet
And I can understand his talk.
He takes my hand, and in my ear
He utters things I would not hear.

Why stand upon the corner thus,
While all the world goes round and round?
Who are these people tremulous?
Oh, they are clay best underground:
Yet still a girl might pass, and wake
Another dream for old time's sake.

The minstrel in the tinsel snow
(Christ's frozen tears, for Christmas comes!)
Chirps dauntlessly of long ago
In hopes to get some copper crumbs.
And down the street the wind runs cold—
And so I know the world is old.

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Palms
1 9 2 5

LANGSTON HUGHES

A HOUSE IN TAOS

RAIN

Thunder of the Rain God:
And we three
Smitten by beauty.

Thunder of the Rain God:
And we three
Weary, weary.

Thunder of the Rain God:
And you, she and I
Waiting for nothingness.

Do you understand the stillness
Of this house in Taos
Under the thunder of the Rain God?

SUN

That there should be a barren garden
About this house in Taos

Is not so strange,
But that there should be three barren hearts
In this one house in Taos,—
Who carries ugly things to show the sun?

MOON

Did you ask for the beaten brass of the moon?
We can buy lovely things with money,
You, she and I,
Yet you seek,
As though you could keep,
This unbought loveliness of moon.

WIND

Touch our bodies, wind.
Our bodies are separate individual things.
Touch our bodies, wind,
But blow quickly
Through the red, white, yellow skins
Of our bodies
To the terrible snarl,
Not mine,
Not yours,
Not hers,
But all one snarl of souls.
Blow quickly, wind,
Before we run back into the windlessness,—
With our bodies,—
Into the windlessness
Of our house in Taos.

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The Nation
1 9 2 5

ELI SIEGEL

HOT AFTERNOONS HAVE BEEN IN MONTANA

Quiet and green was the grass of the field,
The sky was whole in brightness,
And O, a bird was flying, high, there in the sky,
So gently, so carelessly and fairly.
Here, once, Indians shouted in battle,
And moaned after it.
Here were cries, yells, night, and the moon over these men,
And the men making the cries and yells; it was
Hundreds of years ago, when monks were in Europe,
Monks in cool, black monasteries, thinking of God, studying Virgil;
Monks were in Europe, a land having an ocean, miles of water, between
It and this land, America, possessing Montana.
(New York, Vermont, New Mexico, America has too.)
Indians, Indians went through Montana,
Thinking, feeling, trying pleasurably to live.
This land, shone on by the sun now, green, quiet now
Was under their feet, this time; we live now and it is hundreds of years after.

Montana, thou art, and I say thou art, as once monks said
of God,
And thought, too: Thou art.
Thou hast Kansas on thy side;
Kansas is in the newspapers, talked of by men;
Idaho thou hast, and far away, Singapore, Alabama, Brazil.
That bird over this green, under that sun, God, how sweet
and graceful it is!
Could we ever do that? Machines that fly are clumsy and
ugly;
Birds go into the air so softly, so fairly; see its curves;
Earth!
In Montana, men eat and have bodies paining them
Because they eat.
Kansas, with Montana, in America, has, too, men pained
by their eating,
So has England, with Westminster Abbey, where poets lie,
dead now;
O, what their poetry can do; what poetry can do.
There is the brain of man, a soft, puzzling, weak affair;
Lord, the perfect green of this meadow.
Look at the pure heat and light of that big sun,
And the cleanness of the sky.
Night comes, night has come.
Was not Montana here in the Middle Ages, when old Rome
was at its oldest, when
Aristotle wrote,
In Greece, Greece by the Ægean, with the Mediterranean
near?
Indians killed each other here,
With the moon over them.

Indians killed each other near Cape Cod, near Boston, in Louisiana too.
It was before white men came from England, to see them, the white men were seen by them.
Snows have been here, in Montana, while the Indians have been.
Girls are in Helena, mines are in Helena,
Men work in them painfully and long for the bodies of girls;
And long for much more that is in the world, in thee, Earth.
Men work, suffer, are little, ugly, too.
O, mountains are in Montana,
The Rocky Mountains are in California, Utah, Colorado, Montana.
Indians were here, too, by rivers, in these mountains, lived in mountains.
Europe has its Paris, and men live there; Stendhal, Rabelais, Gautier, Hume were there.
God, what is it man can do?
There are millions of men in the world, and each is one man,
Each is one man by himself, taking care of himself all the time, and changing other men and being changed by them;
The quiet of this afternoon is strange, haunting, awful;
Hear that buzzing in the hot grass, coming from live things; and those crows' cries from somewhere;
There is a sluggish, sad brook near here too,
The bird is gone now, so graceful, fair as it was,
And the sky has nothing but the brightness of air in it.
The clean color of air.
The sun makes it be afternoon here;

In Paris and Sumatra, it is night;
Dark Malays are in lands by the Indian Ocean,
An ocean there is we call the Indian;
Men went to these Malays near the Indian Ocean, in the eighteenth century, in frigates and ships-of-the-line;
And men living here are Indians, too.
O, the cry of the Indian in battle, hundreds of years ago, in woods, in plains, in mountains;
War might have been seen once in this meadow, now in green, now hot;
Hundreds of years ago it might have been seen, and tens of years, and a thousand.
There was love among Indians; there is love in Paris, Moscow, London, and New York.
Men have been in war, ever,
And men have thought, and written books, about war, love, and mind.
Mist comes in this earth,
And there have been sad, empty, pained, longing souls going through mist.
O, the green in mist that is to be seen in the world.
And time goes on, the world is moving, all of it, so time goes on in this world.
It is now a hot, quiet afternoon in Montana,
Montana with the Rocky Mountains;
Virginia with the Allegany Mountains:
(Indians ambushed Braddock in the Allegany Mountains; the woods, once quiet, once dark,
Sounded sharply and deeply with cries, moans, and shots; Washington was there;
Washington Irving wrote of Washington, so did Frenchmen who knew Voltaire;

In 1755, Braddock was ambushed and died, and then, in Paris men and women wrote of philosophy who were elegant, witty and thought spirit was of matter; say Diderot, Helvetius, and Madame du Deffand; Samuel Johnson was in London then; Pitt was in England; men lived in Montana, Honolulu, Argentina and near the Cape of Good Hope; O, Life of Man, O, Earth; Earth, again and again!)

And there have been hot afternoons, all through time, history, as men say;

Hot afternoons have been in Montana.

There have been hot afternoons, and quiet, soft, lovely twilights; Gray, Collins, Milton wrote of these;

There have been hot afternoons in quiet English churchyards, and hot afternoons in America, in Montana; and green everywhere and bright sky; there are deserts in Africa, America, and Australia;

Clear air is healthful; men go to Colorado, near Wyoming, near Montana in the mountains, sick men go to the mountains where Indians once lived, fought and killed each other.

O, the love of bodies, O, the pains of bodies on hot, quiet afternoons, everywhere in the world.

Men work in factories on hot afternoons, now in Montana, and now in New Hampshire; walk the streets of Boston on hot afternoons;

Novels, stupid and forgot, have been written in afternoons;

Matinées of witty comedies in London and New York are in afternoons;

Indians roamed here, in this green field, on quiet, hot afternoons, in years now followed by hundreds of years.

Hot afternoons are real; afternoons are; places, things, thoughts, feelings are; poetry is;
The world is waiting to be known; Earth what it has in it! The past is in it;
All words, feelings, movements, words, bodies, clothes, girls, trees, stones, things of beauty, books, desires are in it; and all are to be known;
Afternoons have to do with the whole world;
And the beauty of mind, feeling knowingly the world!
The world of girls' beautiful faces, bodies and clothes, quiet afternoons, graceful birds, great words, tearful music, mind-joying poetry, beautiful livings, loved things, known things: a to-be-used and known and pleasure-to-be giving world.

···()···

The Dial
1 9 2 6

E. E. CUMMINGS

FOUR POEMS

I

i go to this window

just as day dissolves
when it is twilight (and
looking up in fear

i see the new moon
thinner than a hair)

making me feel
how myself has been coarse and dull
compared with you, silently who are
and cling
to my mind always

But now she sharpens and becomes crisper,
until i smile with knowing
—and all about
herself

the sprouting largest final air

plunges
inward with hurled
downward thousands of enormous dreams

II

if being morticed with a dream
myself speaks

(whispering,
suggesting that our souls
inhabit whatever is between them)
knowing my lips hands the way i move
my habits laughter

i say
you will perhaps pardon,
possibly you will comprehend. and how
this has arrived your mind may guess

if at sunset
it should, leaning against me, smile;
or (between dawn and twilight) giving

your eyes, present me also
with the terror of shrines

which noone has suspected (but
wherein silently
always
are kneeling the various deaths
which are your lover lady: together with what keen
innumerable lives he has not lived.

III

how this uncouth enchanted
person, arising from a
restaurant, looks breathes or moves
—climbing (past light after
light) to turn, disappears

the very swift and
invisibly living
rhythm of your heart possibly

will understand;
or why (in

this most exquisite of cities) all
of the long night a fragile imitation of
(perhaps) myself carefully wanders
streets dark and, deep

with rain. . . .

(he, slightly whom or
cautiously this person

and this imitation resemble,
descends into the earth with the year
a cigarette between his ghost-lips

gradually)
remembering badly, softly
your
kissed thrice suddenly smile

IV

but if i should say
goodmorning trouble adds
up all sorts of quickly
things on the slate of that
nigger's
face (but

If i should say thankyouverymuch

mr rosenbloom picks strawberries
with beringed hands) (but if

i Should say solong my
tailor
chuckles

like a woman in a dream) (but if i
should say
Now the all saucers
but cups if begin to spoons dance every-

should where say over the damned table and we
hold lips Eyes everything
hands you know what
happens) but if i should,
Say,

···()···

Palms
1 9 2 6

WARREN GILBERT

THE JOY RIDE

Brown velvety bold eyes, smeared cheeks,
impertinent small nose, oddly provocative,
hair overdone, abundant, almost black,
mouth twisted, mouth intransigent,
a chin
that gave the lie direct to the other features—
a competent chaste chin.
Otherwise

an ordinary hooker : hat, blouse, skirt, shoes,
stockings, gloves, beads, bag,
each article expensive and not right,
her figure small and exquisitely wrongly
managed, loose
where it should have been articulate,
lolloping . . .
by no means undeveloped . . .

When she got in she crossed her legs
and pressed a tantalizing hoof against
my gas and emergency right ankle.
I made no plans, but thought I to myself,
BY GOD, YOU'LL WALK BACK THEN.

Sunset and evening star, a 1920
ford coupe. The noisy motor sang,
the trolley poles raced backward as we rattled on
under the viaduct and up the Dundee hill
and out upon the dirt roads where the cottages
are few and far between. And she
beside me, a small bundle of
unrealized energies of delight. She talked
incessantly of nothing in a tone
of strained enthusiasm
very depressing.
I was mute. Her resolute bold attitude
of utter willingness daunted me terribly.
The horrible inhuman lack of friendliness
in her brown eyes daunted me terribly.
How do we get that way?

She snuggled cozily. She smelled—
her brand of talcum smelled all right.
She should have been attractive. Everything
was there including time and place. Besides,
I had been looking for a woman for
the past few weeks.

Why don't you say something?
Why do you look at me that way?
My face ain't dirty, is it?

We had
drawn up beside the road some seven miles out.
I was expected to say something nice.
She expected to make the usual returns
and. . . . God, what a fizzle!

What is the matter with you, anyway?
What did you bring me out here for, if you
don't want to talk to me? For half
a cent I'd get out of this bus and beat
it back alone.
That made me think of what I thought at first,
BY GOD, YOU'LL WALK BACK THEN.

The immeasurable young night closed in
upon us as we sat watching the stars.
Men are odd creatures. Women have to wait.
It's always been that way.
She snuggled closer. One must treat a nut
According to the nut psychology.
Yet one should have a handle after all—
something to work on.

She flared up again.
What is it you don't like in me, she said,
I don't pretend to be much but I've got
feelings, she said. I'm alive, she said.

I answered, Hush.
That is the trouble, you're alive.
I had a premonition that you were,
and now you say you are. I couldn't possibly
touch a live woman.
I should be scared to death.

What is the matter with you anyway?
Are you bughouse?

You know, You know.

I don't. I don't.
If you are trying to be funny?

Live people can't do such things. You know that.

I'll get right out and hoof it back to town.
Thoroughly frightened she began to fumble
at the car door catch.

Wait, honey, we are going to have a talk.
I shan't disturb a hair of your bright head.

Good Lord, you are particular, she said.

Listen. There's something intervenes,
There's something that won't let us act that way.

I don't know what it is . . . something alive
in you, something in me . . .
It will not let us do such things.

I think you're crazy,
You don't have to like me, understand?
But there's no need to rub it in.
Supposing I like you . . .

It isn't that.
It's just the opposite of that.
I love you . . . that damn chin of yours . . .
something about it . . . suddenly I saw
you were a poor good human creature like
myself . . . needing nothing but sympathy . . .
That is the thing that came alive in me
so suddenly. Love is the thing
That came alive so suddenly in you.

I'm going to get right out.
No gentleman can talk that way to me
and get away with it. I'm a slob.
I know it. I'm a slob, but I've got feelings.
I don't mind
a little fun, you understand, but you
would strip the last thread from a woman's soul.
You musn't do it.
I won't let you do it.

My dear, it can't be helped. The thing is done.
Something has butted in and spoiled our game.
We meant to be quite practical, im-

personal, sketching the edges of
desire, secure in an agreeable
moral remoteness, when suddenly . . . we merged!
I wouldn't touch your body for the world.
I should be scared to death.

She said, and her voice trembled when she said,
Don't worry about that. Wait till you're asked,
she said, and then, You'd better start your engine,
Mister Man. Which made me think
of what I'd thought of twice before,
BY GOD, YOU'LL WALK BACK THEN.

Listen.
I feel as bad as you do over this.
You see the fix we're in—
Awkward for me, impossible for you.

I've always tried to keep my self-respect.
the girl said. You don't leave me anything.

There were the stars. They didn't seem to help.
I had to grope it out alone. Listen, I said,
There are some things that any girl may do
with any man . . . they do not matter . . .
they are soon forgotten . . .
they are the unimportant moral things.
But there is something that she cannot do
with any man without uncovering
her soul to the last garment.
You've done that,
although you didn't mean to do it.

You've let me see something you thought was covered.

Shut up, the girl said, haven't you any sense
of decency?

O what a darling girl! I cried. O what
poor innocent good souls we are!
That is what you and I were trying
to cover up. That is what all the world
is trying to cover up. How could we help
loving each other when we found out that?

The girl was laughing softly. Well, she said,
what are you going to do about it now?

That is the hell of it, I said. We can't go back
to where we started. That's impossible.
We know too much; we've seen too much for that.
And I can't pet you . . . I can't use you like
an ordinary . . . you're too close up . . . your blood
beats in my body, yet we never were
so far apart. Why should this have to happen?

She slid a shy hand into mine.
You are a nut, she said, and I'm a nut.
How did you know that was the way of it?
I'd rather be in this damn ford, she said,
with you in this damn ford than be in heaven.
No one, she said, not even God, she said,
has ever been as true to me before.
I'm what you said.
I'm better than you said.

I'm life itself and never can go wrong,
I'm the undying singer and the song,
I'm the slow wind that blows along the wheat,
I'm the swift water running clean and sweet,
I'm the brown earth from whom we all arose,
I'm the bright skies that all about us close,
I'm the hunger and the wine-cup and the bread,
I'm the one consolation left the dead.

She flung her hands out wildly . . .
grabbed at her breast . . .
tore at her flimsy waist . . .
What did you think?
This body here, this painted scented flesh,
bathed and adorned for casual bridegrooms,
was me . . . me! You're the first man
who ever saw, or ever tried to see . . . that.
The others don't want much . . . they don't get much
they're entirely welcome.
You were a fool. You wanted
everything and got . . . nothing. She laughed harshly.
Christ, let's go back. This is getting
monotonous.

We rode back rather quietly,
at one with one another and the night.
I left her at the lunch counter. She said
I'll see you sometime later
sometime when you don't
feel like you do tonight.

Maybe, I said, if there's a crowd, maybe.

···()···

The Nation
1 9 2 6

BABETTE DEUTSCH

THOUGHTS AT THE YEAR'S END

Draw a clean breath of crisp and moonless air;
Fix eyes upon the dark;
set ears to catch
the knocking of the wind along the ground,
whereto no grass replies, being numb as wire.
The traveling clock you carry everywhere
about with you, the jewel of your bones,
ticks with too little sound,
keeping the time no other soul may share,
making you know
here's night, here's winter, here's year's end
to bear
once more,
and without a god's help, now,
without a devil, and without desire.

O happy Egypt! O most eloquent stones,
heaped like a hill of thunder, frescoed in gold
and black and rusted vermilion,
to comfort a god, the son of the Sun, with riches.
O wise embalmers'

bandages tightly wound, to keep the dignity of the Pharaoh's bones
unbitten by any tooth, save, it may be,
the envy of a slave.
O black marble nostrils, spread like wings,
squat dark doorways
open to eternal life.
We come upon you, fifty centuries having passed,
we, the sorrowful heirs and assigns
of your grave-treasure, your bread, your heart, your rings,
buried with you—
we remember, O son of the Sun,
that even the first Father, shining
on the Moskva as on the Rhein, the Seine as on the Thames, the Hudson
as on old Nile—
even the Sun is doomed,
and dooms us in a little while.

In His eyes
two thousand years are as a moment.
Now at the winter solstice, when the light is squeezed
like a drop of watery chrome on the faded earth,
to be lapped up by a brumous blotter of darkness,
does He remember
the long December night through which the chosen
virgin labored to bring
peace to the people?
(Sing:
holy, holy, holy,
Lord God almighty!)
He endured much—

the kiss of the betrayal,
the heavy way up the hard hill,
the ropes, the nails, the spear,
the death agony, the slow, long rending, most the mockery
He cast upon Himself when He cried out,
"Elohai, Elohai, lama sabachthani?"
That moment is over.
And we, who have seen His peace
shredded by Huns and Romans, priests and kings, rich men
and rabble,
we whom He could not save
(Himself He could not save)
now watch the wintry dark as a sick seaman watches
his coldly tossing grave.

But who are we
that we should envy the Pharaoh,
the Keeper of the House, who built his house forever.
or that we
should rate the God of the Hebrews, One and Eternal,
because He turned into a Trinity, and, soon thereafter,
ceased?
We are so small
the fleas that crawled over behemoth bulked
larger to that huge pasture than we to the stars,
and to the night the blinking stars are less
than fireflies to the whole wilderness.
O vanity
of man! that would spin Cosmos out of a small gray clot
locked in a fragile shell.
Say: God is not.
Say: man dies,

every man, alone
(bite on this iron at midnight, when you lie
sleepless, in bed, with half a life gone by, eaten away—
the day
will be undone,
love and ambition be ashy on your tongue,
and oblivion
will roll its weight over upon you, ton and giant ton).
Say: God is not, death's instant, history's
a fever the moon died of—
what way now?
There's no help in the hills, for they will crumble,
nor in the skies, for earth is a dropped stitch
in their pattern
(but even to fumble, there must be Fingers,
and for a pattern—Mind) . . .

Reach out, reach out, you will touch nothing,
you will find
nothing,
but yet reach,
with the balked pressure of the blind on emptiness,
reach, grope, seize, shape.
Or, let the ice-blue winding-sheet
that waits for earth
swaddle your infant wisdom at the birth,
or, from the cracked bones of despair
suck marrow
and bend Now
backward and forward in your spirit's heat.
and bear . . . and bear . . .

···()···

Poetry
1 9 2 7

MALCOLM COWLEY

BLUE JUNIATA

BONES OF A HOUSE

Farmhouse curl horns of plenty, hide
paintless lean shanks against a barn or crouch
empty in the shadow of a mountain. Here
there is no house at all—

only the bones of a house,
lilacs growing beside them,
roses in clumps between them,
honeysuckle over;
a door, a crooked chimney,
mud-chinked, a yawning fireplace,
the skeleton of a pine,

a railroad thirty yards from the empty door.

I heard a railroad section man playing on a jew's-harp—
Where is now that merry party I remember long ago?
Nelly was a Lady . . . twice . . . Old Black Joe,
as if he laid a hand against my shoulder
saying

—Your father lived here long ago,
your father's father built the house, lies buried
under the pine—
Sing *Nelly was a lady,*
Blue Juniata . . . Old Black Joe.

For sometimes a familiar music hammers
Like blood against the eardrums, paints a mist
across the eyes, as if the smell of lilac
moss roses and the past become a music
made visible, a monument of air.

CHESTNUT RIDGE

The Northern Turnpike winds
slowly over the flanks of Chestnut Ridge,
constricting slowly and like a snake the gauntness
of mountain barns.

It is brown, grey, the color of a snake
turned on its back to die,

and yet was living once: stage-coaches wore
these ruts where brown weeds grow, the Stage Express
three times a week for Pittsburgh and the West,
three times a week for Philadelphia. Listen
. . . the creak of harness on the eastern slope,
horses break to a gallop, hubs graze past
a boat-shaped wagon westward bound. A boy
rides to the mill, his balanced sack of wheat
on the saddle horn; a shower of fine pebbles

forever rains against the dashboard, till
the sound dies away in chestnut trees.

At moments like this moment time becomes
something barely perceptible, a point
centuries into the future, into a past
without memory, a dead unchanging moment.

Cows moo beside the spring, crows gather where
in the south field a plowman drives his furrow.

Before he drives another there will be
new peoples, wars, new multiples of death,
before the sun drops westward or the purple
deepens and fades on the chestnuts of the Ridge.

LAUREL MOUNTAIN

Listen: we were working in the woods
on Laurel Mountain somewhere, and the rain
against our roof that rusted, a windless rain
dripped all night in the tangles of our hair—

all night the trickle of rain across our faces.
We covered the flour barrel with gunny-sacks
and still the rain soaked through them. In the morning
three men together left the cabin, marched

into the hemlock woods that smelt of rain.
Three twisted men together in the woods,
two of them sawing a hemlock tree and one
who faced them chopping. His axe-head broke,

split from the wet helve and one man fell.
Grunting he fell on his knees in the cold moss,
Wiped blood away from his eyes, cursed God and died.
Reuben and Simeon: we were his two sons,

his tall sons twisted with their anger, cold
with hatred for his body. Spring was late.
Corn froze that year in June. The woods were bare.
We hollowed out a grave in the empty woods,

laid him among the hemlock roots face down
and fetched a spray of dogwood for his hair—
I don't know why—then shovelled the dirt in,
burrowing with our hands and feet. The rain

beat steadily on our shoulders hunched in prayer
against a tall God like a hemlock tree,
his arms like crooked branches, his head bare,
his voice a cold rain dripping in the moss,
and hemlock needles tangled in his hair.

EMPTY BARN, DEAD FARM

Houses are incidents, barns four-square and real
with doors to swallow a wagonload of wheat,
with empty windows to let the pigeons in.

They used to say that Elliot's barn-floor
was clean enough to eat your dinner off it.
He was a hard man, careful of his stock,
proud of his farm.

The last week in July they threshed his wheat
behind the barn. Upstairs in the pink bedroom
in the four-post bed, under the flowered and quilted
coverlet, old Elliot lay dying.
—Move
the bed closer to the window. Prop
my head with pillows. Raise it higher. Go.
My back aches. I feel tired, dead tired.
I want to see the farm.

The square back of the barn hid most of it.

He heard the roar of straw in the separator,
when belts ran slack the chut-chut of the tractor,
saw nothing, only the jutting end of the stacker
and straw that fell in a river from its tip—
straw falling as water falls,
chaff in a yellow mist.

His eyes were colored like new straw, and damp
he wiped them with a corner of the sheet,
then saw his stubble fields beyond the barn,
farther the green of month-old buckwheat, farther
his woodlot ending in a misty line.

It touched the house, almost, and hid the fields
the time he drove here first, in a new wagon
proud of his new wife, fifty years ago.

She dressed in printed cotton.
They owned a stumpy clearing

ten acres, pine, a cabin
empty and windowless, no barn.

He hitched the horses to a chestnut root
and took a double handful of black loam,
sifted it through his fingers slowly, fetched
his axe from under the wagon-seat and chopped
the tallest of the pines.

He was a hard man, and he made the farm,
working into the dusk to clear his fields,
sparing nobody, careful of his horses,
slowly buying more land as prices rose.
Next spring he'd plow the valley fields for corn
and hills for clover to keep the soil from washing.

Hogs to fatten. Corn would be going higher.

He suddenly understood that he should do
nothing of the sort, that corn and clover
would grow by natural laws and harvest come
without his supervising.

—Bob will have it all.
Bob is flighty.
He'll tear up everything to suit himself.
He'll finish nothing.
Bob is lazy.
The farm will go to sticks.

He saw the fields and felt that he was wrong.

—Bob is like all the other Elliots.
He will settle down.
The farm is stronger than all the Elliots.
The farm will keep on growing and me dead.

—Tell him to buy a tedder. The barn wants shingles.

He heard the dinner-bell.
The tractor grumbled a moment.
The belt creaked and was still.

And suddenly old Elliot was seized
with a swift fury to annihilate
his past, to starve the horses in their stalls,
to fire the woodlot, mow the buckwheat green,
poison the well, burn down the barn, plant corn
on the steep hillside, so the Summer rains
would wash away the soil, and so this farm
once created with his living hands
by two dead hands might be destroyed. He prayed
—Christ, O merciful Christ, to give me strength.
There's matches on the mantelpiece, the straw
is dry as powder.

He strained upward, clenched his chalky hands
as if they held the farm. His face went white.
His head fell slowly back upon the pillow

which Annie had embroidered with an E
in purple cotton, and she brought it out
for special occasions only. People said
she was a grand good housewife, Simon was

a hard man, wealthy but a poor provider,
rough and blaspheming, only loved his land.
Pity the wicked. Empty barn, dead farm.

The way he was taken off, it was a judgment.

BILL GEORGE

Old Bill George
chews tobacco, tips a broad-brimmed dusty
black felt hat and says,
—I was top sergeant.
They killed the captain and the two lieutenants,
for eight months the company was mine—
Sergeant Bill George, wounded at Chickamauga,
prisoner at Andersonville.

Dignity is an old man
dribbling tobacco on the yellow corners
of his moustache.

—Listen, Bill George (your skin is china brown
your eyes empty, your hands gentle and long
as a sea mist falling) you ran away to fight,
cheated your neighbors, drank, had bastards, say?
—Maybe. I can't remember. A long time ago.

I used to find him in the Presbyterian
graveyard, limping slowly under the cedars
spelling over a tomb.
—Humpty Mert Miller
ran a water sawmill in Pine Flats,

a hard man, a good hater, died fighting drunk.
Bury me at his side.

Now Reverend Death when he comes driving through
Westmoreland County in his black three-seated
surrey, whoaing at a farm to shout,
—Jump in, Eliza! Cain, jump in . . . there's room—
(nobody dares to answer him)—
when Death
in his black suit and clerical collar turns
into Bill George's lane, nobody speaks,
nobody moves but the old man chewing tobacco
thinking of his friends.

Bill George climbed into the surrey, took the reins,

and somewhere was a noise of lamentation—
grief without bitterness, a quiet moan,
old lonesome women weeping in every farmhouse
from Indian Meadows west to Cherry Tree.

THE URN

Wanderers outside the gate, in hollow
landscapes without memory, we carry
each of us an urn of native soil,
of not impalpable dust a double handful

carelessly gathered (was it garden mould
or wood-soil fresh with hemlock needles, pine
and princess pine, this little earth we bore
in secret, vainly, over the frontier?)

A parcel of the soil not wide enough
or firm enough to build a dwelling on
or deep enough to dig a grave, but cool
and sweet enough to sink the nostrils in
and find the smell of home, or in the ears
rumors of home, the ocean in a shell.

THE STREETS OF AIR

All night waiting, in an empty house
under dry electric moons, they cast
no shadow, a man striding impatiently
sucking a dry pipe, waiting
an empty sacrificial vessel waiting
without patience to be filled with God.

He said
—There was a scratching at my door
the noise of some one fingering the latch
once, but I opened and only found the night
empty of sound, empty—
The images of drouth
in a parched land growing, acacias in the sand
with thorns and thornlike leaves that cast no shadow,
dry leaves silently moving in the sun.

A wall rose there, of hewn enormous stones
laid without mortar and a gateway, barred
and skies closed in.
But you shall hear the thunder
of bursting walls, the gates of night swing wide,
and journeys will be set against the sunrise;
Your path shall be the empty streets of air. . . .

The Dial
1 9 2 7

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

PATERSON

Before the grass is out the people are out
and bare twigs still whip the wind—
when there is nothing, in the pause between
snow and grass in the parks and at the street ends
—Say it, no ideas but in things—
nothing but the blank faces of the houses
and cylindrical trees
bent, forked by preconception and accident
split, furrowed, creased, mottled, stained
secret—into the body of the light—

These are the ideas, savage and tender
somewhat of the music, et cetera
of Paterson, that great philosopher—

From above, higher than the spires, higher
even than the office towers, from oozy fields
abandoned to grey beds of dead grass
black sumac, withered weed stalks
mud and thickets cluttered with dead leaves—
the river comes pouring in above the city

and crashes from the edge of the gorge
in a recoil of spray and rainbow mists—
—Say it, no ideas but in things—
and factories, crystallized from its force,
like ice from spray upon the chimney rocks

. . . . . .

Say it! No ideas but in things. Mr.
Paterson has gone away
to rest and write. Inside the bus one sees
his thoughts sitting and standing. His thoughts
alight and scatter—

Who are these people (how complex
this mathematic) among whom I see myself
in the regularly ordered plateglass of
his thoughts, glimmering before shoes and bicycles—?
They walk incommunicado, the
equation is beyond solution, yet
its sense is clear—that they may live
his thought is listed in the Telephone
Directory—

and there's young Alex Shorn
whose dad the boot-black bought a house
and painted it inside
with seascapes of pale green monochrome—
the infant Dionysus springing from
Apollo's arm—the floors oakgrained in
Balkan fashion—Hermes' nose, the body
of a gourmand, the lips of Cupid, the eyes
the black eyes of Venus' sister—

But who! who are these people? It is
his flesh making the traffic, cranking the car
buying the meat—
Defeated in achieving the solution they
fall back among cheap pictures, furniture
filled silk, cardboard shoes, bad dentistry
windows that will not open, poisonous gin
scurvy, toothache—

. . . . . .

But never, in despair and anxiety
forget to drive wit in, in till it
discover that his thoughts are decorous and simple
and never forget that though his thoughts are decorous
and simple, the despair and anxiety

the grace and detail of
a dynamo—

Divine thought! Jacob fell backwards off the press
and broke his spine. What pathos, what mercy
of nurses (who keep birthday books)
and doctors who can't speak proper english—
is here correctly on a spotless bed
painless to the Nth power—the two legs
perfect without movement or sensation—

Twice a month Paterson receives letters
from the Pope, his works are translated
into French, the clerks in the post office
ungum the rare stamps from his packages
and steal them for their children's albums

So in his high decorum he is wise

. . . . . .

What wind and sun of children stamping the snow
stamping the snow and screaming drunkenly—
The actual, florid detail of cheap carpet
amazingly upon the floor and paid for
as no portrait ever was—Canary singing
and geraniums in tin cans spreading their leaves
reflecting red upon the frost—
They are the divisions and imbalances
of his whole concept, made small by pity
and desire, they are—no ideas beside the facts—

. . . . . .

···()···

The Nation
1 9 2 7

THOMAS HORNSBY FERRIL

THIS FOREMAN

"What did you see when the girders rose?"
"A house of steel, a net."
"What else?"
"Men in their working clothes,
Men with their foreheads wet;
I saw them sway on the high steel beams,
But I knew their heads were wet."

"Did you see a workman slip and fall dead?"
"I saw one leave the steel;
I heard what some of the others said,
And I saw the swallows wheel
Round the foreman with the twisted head,
Whose foot was half a heel."

"When the man fell, what did this foreman do?"
"He sang, he sang like a swan
Of how two naked lovers loved
In a cage of steel till dawn;
He sang—and his mouth was a slit of dark—
Of a sword that could be drawn."

"You say you heard this foreman *sing?*"
"I heard him sing like a swan."
"You say this foreman stopped to *sing*
When a man had fallen down?
(He says he heard this foreman sing
Like a swan when a man fell down.)"

"You heard this foreman testify?"
"I heard each word he said."
"Now briefly what did the witness say?"
"He said when the man fell dead,
He slid like a flash to the dead man's side
And gave the dead first aid."

"All right, now what did this foreman do?"
"I heard him sing like a swan
About two naked lovers trapped
In a web of steel till dawn."

"You swear to God you heard him *sing?*"
"By God, that man's the one."

"Court please, I'll ask the witness more,
Court please, I wish to show,
Court please, the witness on the stand,
Court please, is trying to
Make light of what he saw and mock
The State, Court please, and you."

"Do you affirm that this foreman *sang?*"
"I affirm that he's the one."
Now the bailiff hammers a terrible din,
But nobody shouts: Tin, tin, come in!
Because they all stare at the foreman instead,
Who licks the slit in his crooked head.

"You stayed there after twilight came?"
"The twilight did not come;
The steel net shone like a russet flame
At the touch of the watchman's thumb;
The men went home and the watchman walked
His rounds slowly and dumb."

"All right, the twilight did not come;
You stayed, what happened then?"
"I saw the foreman stealing back,
He climbed to the top again,
He moved in the misty girder net
And he sang like many men."

"Court please, I'll ask the witness more:
What did this foreman sing?"

"He sang the strength of steel and steel
In days past measuring;
He tapped the beams with a monkey wrench;
I could feel the high crane ring."

"You're sure it was a monkey wrench?"
"He sang of a snare for love;
He called to the silver hounds of love
In the wooded moon above,
And I heard him cry 'The hounds are dead,
What am I dreaming of?' "

"Go on, you heard this foreman sing?"
"I heard him sing like a ghost,
How a man gone down was a man to lead
The van of a falling host:
'Let my green steel stiffen in the frost
To snare what men love most!' "

"What men love most? He sang of that?"
"I did not understand,
For he sang of the living lives of men
As if the steel had spanned
Their lives with something true and cold
That nobody had planned."

"Did your family know that you were there?"
"Your honor, I object!"
"Sustained!"
"That's all."
"Go down the hall to the last door and collect

Your fee . . . the last door on the right."
"Poor chap, his mind is wrecked."

Two figures loitered down the hall,
And each signed for its fee.
"I could not understand your song,
Explain the hounds to me."
"Not here, fool! Climb the steel tonight,
The moon goes down at three!"

···()···

Poetry
1 9 2 8

ELINOR WYLIE

FOUR POEMS

ADDRESS TO MY SOUL

My soul, be not disturbed
By planetary war;
Remain securely orbed
In this contracted star.

Fear not, pathetic flame;
Your sustenance is doubt.
Glassed in translucent dream
They cannot snuff you out.

Wear water, or mask
Of unapparent cloud;

Be brave and never ask
A more defunctive shroud.

The universal points
Are shrunk into a flower;
Between its delicate joints
Chaos keeps no power.

The pure integral form,
Austere and silver-dark
Is balanced on the storm
In its predestined arc.

Small as a sphere of rain
It slides along the groove
Whose path is furrowed plain
Among the suns that move.

The shapes of April buds
Outlive the phantom year:
Upon the void at odds
The dewdrop falls severe.

Five-petalled flame, be cold:
Be firm, dissolving star:
Accept the stricter mould
That makes you singular.

THE HEART UPON THE SLEEVE

Dear Heart, behold you bound
Upon a ragged sleeve,

And no one will believe
The emblem of the wound.

Good Heart, because I wear
Your colour on my arm,
A shield, a trefoil charm,
That turns a sword in air,

They take you for a patch
Upon the tattered cloth;
A mournful lunar moth,
A bird they cannot catch;

A tinsel favour tied
Above the living vein;
They take you for a stain
Of vanity and pride.

Poor Heart, and are you pierced,
Though frivolously worn
The arrow, and the thorn
Where bleeds a rose reversed?

Remember it is well
That no one can perceive
These drops upon my sleeve,
Which are invisible.

Never the carrion beak
Shall taste transparent blood
Whose pulse in solitude
Adores and does not break.

Be well, content, dear Heart,
To wear a light disguise
For fear a vulture flies
To tear your strings apart.

LAMENT FOR GLASGERION

The lovely body of the dead,
Wherein he laid him down to rest,
Is shrunken to corruption's thread;
The blood which delicately dressed
The flying bone, the sighing breast,
One with nothingness is made.

The darling garment is outworn;
Its fabric nourishes the moth.
The silk wherein his soul was born,
Woven of flesh and spirit both,
Is crumpled to a pitiful cloth.
His soul lies naked and forlorn.

So one that walks within the air,
Who loves the ghost below the ground,
Rejoices fervently to wear
A body shaken and unsound;
A brow divided by a wound;
A throat encircled by a care.

Shall I go warm above the cold
Wherein he sleeps without a shroud
Or shred of beauty left to fold
About the poor soul's solitude?

The vanishing dust of my heart is proud
To watch me wither and grow old.

LAST SUPPER

Now that the shutter of the dusk
Begins to tremble in its groove,
I am constrained to strip the husk
From everything I truly love.

So short a time remains to taste
The ivory pulp, the seven pips,
My heart is happy without haste,
With revelation at its lips.

So calm a beauty shapes the core,
So grave a blossom frames the stem,
In this last minute and no more,
My eyes alone shall eat of them.

···()···

Poetry
1 9 2 9

CHARLES A. WAGNER

THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

One man's shoulder, another man's thigh—
The unknown soldier, here I lie.
Rest and quiet is all I seek,

Letting the chambermaid statesmen speak,
Letting the peace that they begot
Rot in the quick earth as I rot,
Letting the Peace that they declared
Fall in the pit my bones have shared,
Letting the kings and queens go by
One man's shoulder, another man's thigh.

The unknown soldier, here I lie.
One man's forehead, another man's eye,
One man's collar-bone, one man's leg
By which to lift the world a peg.
They made of me a handy penny
Because my bones are made of many;
But though my limbs are all assorted,
The brain of me is undistorted,
Is all alive and full of reason
And tracking still the trail of treason. . . .

They are not dead. Their brains are steady—
The millions lying still lie heady.
Their eyes and fingers gleam and point
And there are flames from every joint.
Not one is lost, they all are known,
They tally, every thread and bone,
Their sleep is false, disturbed, unsound,
You hear it in the very ground—
It mutters: "All is not yet over,
There's more of me than tracks of clover."

One leg's a runner's, fleet and thin;
He'll bring the early violets in

And bind them in his sweetheart's hair
When love has dropped the dress of care.
One leg's a farmer's, badly torn;
He'll space the even rows with corn
And call the cows in from the field
When rust has hammered on the shield.
He'll have a daughter, tall and fair,
With purple violets in her hair.

One arm's a thief's arm, long and white;
He'll rest his head on it all night
And turn the plow from off the stone
When men take each their little throne.
One arm's a poet's, straight and strong,
For whom I sing this bit of song;
He has a violet from each eye
Continuing his sight of sky,
And from each fingertip there goes
A want that's ended in a rose.

Unknown, I haunt each palace door,
I stand upon each judgment floor.
Unknown, from out my mingled pit
I leer upon the law, new-writ.
Aye, and my tomb is made of fire
Where Heaven and Hell both draw desire;
A caldron for some God afar
To lean down and prepare a star;
A seed, deep fallen in the earth,
To reassure itself of birth!

One man's shoulder, another man's arm,
By which to steer the world from harm.

Unknown, the wind will tell my heart
And make wild roses spring and start.
Unknown, the tongues of men will turn
The fiery sentences I burn—
No mortal names to hush the cry,
But one man's shoulder, another man's thigh!
A loss where men would pity give,
A gain where thought itself may live.

They do not know my mingled thought,
They who have wreaths and speeches brought,
And doffed their hats and bowed before
The "symbol of the end of war."
My thought is further than they know
Who mingled me unknowing so:
My limbs are shattered and unknown,
Stronger than I would be alone.
I am not one, but I am all,
I answer every soldier's call. . . .

My thought runs fire through the ground—
Each battlefield, from mound to mound,
Since first man ever learned the thrust
That made him kin to all the dust,
My thought is of another war
With love and life to battle for.
I shall be gathering by rank
And halt before Time's outer flank.
About!—and muster all the dead
Who ever falsely fell and bled.

Unknown, my song shall weave its horn
Into the ranks of the unborn,

Unknown, my strength and secret lies
(One man's shoulder, another man's eyes)
And until Love walks in the sun
I shall not lay aside this gun;
Until the busy streets proclaim
That life and beauty are the same;
Until men's voices find the power
To call each colored weed a flower.

···()···

Poetry
1 9 2 9

MARJORIE ALLEN SEIFFERT

BREAD OUT OF IRON

IRON FARE

Let courage stiffen
  Neck and chin
When the first nail
  Bites through the skin,

And let pride paint
  With a lasting varnish
The quivering face
  That tears would tarnish.

Press in the nail
  And hold aloft

A metal smile
On lips too soft.

Let nobody see
A wound that bleeds,
Iron's a tonic
The spirit needs.

Let acid reason
And healthy blood
Corrode the nail
And find it good.

Hold wide the eyes
So frost may cover
The pain beneath
From friend and lover,

For hearts that feed
On iron fare
Dispense with pity
And mock despair.

HER VERY TREE

These apples are strange nourishment
For human hunger, but content
She feeds upon this meagre fare
Who might starve piteously elsewhere.
Her bare field grew this stunted tree
Whose roots reach deeper than the sea,
Whose sap, a thin and salty wine

Is drawn from the green ocean's brine,
Rising through gnarly roots to blight
Hard leaves, impervious to the light,
Whose frugal show of April blossom
Fell early to the earth's warm bosom,
On whose black boughs the fruit hangs blind
And armored in a bitter rind;
Chill fruit the hot autumnal sun
With alien wonder looks upon,
Harsh fruit the soft and innocent earth
Incredulously brought to birth.
Yet she is proud, as one for whom
Remembering its April bloom,
And faithful to an April vow
The stunted tree, the twisted bough,
The blackened leaf, the hidden root,
Brought forth a miracle of fruit.
This is her very tree, whereof
The acrid, withered fruit is love.

GAME OF THREE

In such a game
  It is the rule
One of two women
  Must play the fool,

And if the play
  Be neatly done,
Two of the players
  Must blindfold one.

This quaint device
  Will keep them gay
Year in, year out
  To play and play,

Unless, indeed
  A careless word
By the blindfold one
  Be overheard.

O pity, pity
  The lass and her lover.
What will they do
  When the game is over?

O pity, pity
  The blindfold one,
What will they do
  When the game is done?

Give her a kiss
  And a piece of string
And let her play
  With her wedding ring!

THE SECRET PRAYER

The nature of her hands is such
At slipping things they clutch and clutch;
Despite her folly, she knows best
That empty, they are happiest,
And things that start to slip away

No cries, no hungry hands can stay,
And so she made this secret prayer:
"Deprive my hands of all but air,
And let them grow austere and thin
Clothed only in their proper skin,
And let my fingers take their ease
Carelessly folded on my knees;
Whatever comes within their grasp
Let them never reach and clasp;
Teach them the apathy they must
Practice when they turn to dust.
Then let me look a little while
On life with an indifferent smile,
And drop the armor of my pride
With naught to lose, with naught to hide."

THE CRICKETS

The crickets spin
  A tinny tune
Beneath a thin
  And battered moon

Hanging askew
  Against the high
Wall of dark-blue
  Autumn sky.

And in her bed
  A woman lies
Who might be dead
  But for her eyes,

In which two lunes
(How bright they are!)
Reflect the moon's
Image afar.

She hears the meager
Voices shrilling
Of crickets eager
To crickets willing!

"Come quick, quick, quick,
From hedge and thicket,
From leaf and stick
And seize your cricket!

"An autumn taste
Is in the weather,
Make haste, make haste,
And sleep together!"

She thinks above
The crickets clatter:
"And was that love,
And did it matter?

"Happy am I
To be done with weeping!"
Then with a sigh
She soon is sleeping.

BERCEUSE

Silence widens like the ocean,
Here in silence let her drown

Love, and stripped of all emotion
  Like an iron ship go down.

Now the angry storms have died,
  Hatred too has left her free,
Anguish was an icier tide,
  Sorrow was a saltier sea

Than this cool and tranquil billow
  Where so insecurely dead
And longing for a stonier pillow
  Deeply now she sinks her head.

THESE VERY STONES

I : THE TALL TOWER

These are the very stones, be satisfied,
The stones they brought to build a tower—tall,
Massive, and beautiful. This was their wall,
These few rocks laid together, side by side.
After a time they wearied. Neither tried
To add a single stone, and that is all
Save that they blamed each other for the fall
Of their high hopes, each in his baffled pride.
And if they come, asking in shamefaced wonder
Whether the door stands open, there is no door.
No angel warns them off with a voice of thunder,
No god provides the thing they are looking for:
A stronghold and a roof to shelter under. . . .
They find the stones they left, and nothing more.

II : HOUSE OF STRAW

When they were done with stone, they built and shared
A makeshift shelter, where they crept at night,
A house of straw, though dry and water-tight
While yet the trivial storms of summer spared
The flimsy roof, and neither greatly cared.
Now Autumn is here . . . there is no fire to light,
The wind tears at the house in cruel spite
Till all its shameful poverty is bared.
How shall they huddle here against the cold,
At heart alone, only for warmth together?
So many wasted hours, unshared, untold
Divide their minds, that each must wonder whether
Some other casual shelter might not hold
More warmth and comfort in this wintry weather.

III : SHELTER FROM THE NIGHT

If this were all it were sad enough to have known
Beauty and lost it, remembering as they must
From an earlier day, how lofty, how august
The tower they planned of grey, immortal stone;
But winter comes; and when the winds have blown
Their house of straw to atoms, they shall be thrust
Into the bitter darkness of the dust
Each in his separate pride, aloof, alone.
So now by devious paths they are returning
Here where they planned a tower, unfulfilled.
The wall they made outlasted their sojourning
In that frail house of straw. . . . It is late to build
A shelter from the night, but they are learning
To use at last these very stones they spilled.

···()···

Palms
1 9 2 9

JOSEPH AUSLANDER

LETTER TO EMILY DICKINSON

They speak of you as a recluse
In dull commiserative sighs:
As though denial were a ruse,
As though your bravery were lies,
As though it smelled of something pale
And sacrificial to prevail
Against the flesh, against the heart:
As though your wry and radiant art
Were like the shed of silver mail
That sits upon the frightened snail;
As though a "No" instead of "Yes"
Had labeled you an anchoress;
As though the nail, the blood, the tear,
The terrible whisper, the red spear,
The lantern and the fatal kiss
Were somehow love's antithesis!

They could not hear your little moan,
Your fingers tugging at the stone;
They could not know you tall and risen
Nor understand how tight a prison

The world can build with liberty;
And how miraculously free
Courage with both feet fast in hell
Can be; they see, but not so well:
They never see the light that spills
Like stars among your daffodils;
Nor in your orchard ever guess
The shy feet of your loneliness.

Balboa of your fate, you stared
On a Pacific none had dared:
The salt remorseless wrench and roll
Of the unplumbed and single soul.
But you, supplied by bird and bee
With telegrams of eternity,
With bulletins that were stripped to serve
The spirit's naked bone and nerve;
You in your garden in the sun,
Or in the day when there was none,
You were aware, oh so aware
Of something fiercer than despair:
The terrible consuming beauty
Of what a dead age once called duty:
Of what our age of public paint
And public love and unrestraint
In all things else considers now
As out of date as any vow,
As hopelessly old-fashioned as
The lovely thing your silence was.

But we, what do we know beyond
The moment's spurious diamond:

The clever phrase, the fulsome stress
Upon each other's cleverness—
Until a maudlin stupor steals
Into our muddled heads and heels,
And on the sickened brain beats only
The frantic whimper, "Lonely! Lonely!"
For never were we lonelier
Than now: Oh, never, never were
Men and women so afraid
Of being alone, or so dismayed
At prospect of an hour that delves
Into their dark bewildered selves,
Recoiling from the hell that darts
In fiery hungers from their hearts.
The soiled, the sullen little boys
And little girls who drown with noise
The questions tapping canes on stone,
The blind implacable monotone:
Alone, alone, alone, alone.

And yet we sigh, "How much she missed—
The lovelorn sentimentalist!"
You who were filled: who broke the bread
Of dew and stardust and were fed;
Who broke the silver fish and ate
The banquet of the Potentate;
Who shut the door on world's delight
That turns to vinegar ere night;
Who shut the door and shook apart
The doors of Heaven with your heart;
Who in your Amherst garden found

The Passion and the bloody swound,
The red sweat dropping on the ground.

Emily with your eyes the colour
Of sherry; with your jasmine pallor;
The velvet cap upon that hair
Whose warm bronze caught a golden glare
When sunlight jeweled it; whose breath
Parted the red lips, the fine teeth
Tiny as a squirrel's; whose
Upper long lip could refuse
What the full underlip desired;
Whose spirit trembled and transpired
Through your sweet flesh like liquid light
That flashes on a summer night;
Whose ardent hand was like the flower
That shut its wings there for an hour;
Whose whisper was a moth, whose word
Shivered and piped like the small bird
Hidden in alders near some lake
Where twilight and the heart both break.

Ah, Emily, when you said "No,"
When you said "Never," when you said "Go,"
Did he hear what you said unsaid
As, at the gate turning his head,
He saw your little head turned too,
And wept and went and suddenly knew
The Soul's superior instants (your
Phrase) those, only those endure?
The parted Guest, the unsipped Wine,
The Meat untouched, the Palestine

Anticipated in the sense
Of some perpetual Imminence;
The shadow of His Palm upon
The brow of His Centurion.
Therefore in that terrific niche
Wherein you found yourself so rich,
So definite, so undefined;
In that enormous inch of Mind
As infinite as in the sea's
Pink shell thunder profundities,
Or in the acorn smoulders Oak,
Or Rome's blaze in a puff of smoke,
Or rainbows burn in the cocoon,
Or from her dead disk the new moon
Stretches a first faint velvet horn
And April's antlered night is born—
Therefore, clasping the Fact that is,
You found your glittering emphasis;
And then and vividly thereafter
The tinted bubble of your laughter
Lifted and sang from room to room
Of your triumphant daily tomb;
Under your domestic snood
The drama of the neighborhood
Gathered and groped and was resolved
To breathless notes whose wisdom halved
Bereavement or whose beauty doubled
The pleasures of the few untroubled.
With ungrammatical defiant
Ecstasies that tripped some giant
Neatly in a puckered phrase;
With programmes of the commonplace

In bird or flower keyed to such
Excitement by your dancing touch;
With your aerial gossip heard
At dawn, at dusk, from bee, from bird;
With private dialogues in plush
Reported by a rapid thrush;
With snowdrop symptoms on your lawn
The golden doctor of the dawn
Identifies as March's most
Premature and candid ghost;
With orioles, if you inquire,
Putting your cherry tree on fire;
With mole and mouse and twinkling ant
Imperial and nonchalant.
You knew the street and the blurred number
Of blossoms faint with recent slumber:
Arbutus on a rock, the wet
Unwarranted first violet
As yellow as a Louis-d'or,
The columbine like Kohinoor,
The adder's tongue, the trillium,
April's flag and April's drum
And April's flute more delicate
Than footfalls in the waxed estate
Whose polished corridors declare
Like bells the heart that tiptoes there.

To think of getting a poem tucked
With flowers, itself a flower plucked
Out of dark anguish, out of hope
To vindicate an envelope,
With red carnation for a stamp

As though the letter had a lamp!
Dear gentle daily household nun
Announcing sunset and the sun;
Self-shorn, self-kerchiefed, self-restored
Unto the enigmatic Lord;
Flying from a sulphurous God
To the Pearl Presence in the pod;
Striking from a rock that Moses
Never knew, the blood of roses;
Scaling Sinais with a noun
And in some black verb plunging down.
But always without compromise,
Always with accurate brown eyes
That would not veil the too uncouth
Or blur the vision of the truth:
As, when a girl, beneath the shade
The clustering syringa made,
Between the flutter and the shout
Of play you puzzled problems out;
Or in the dim delicious barn,
With sunlight like a spool of yarn
That snarled in interrupted gold,
Searching for freckled eggs to hold,
Your heart skipped like a mouse in danger
To see the sun enact the Manger,
Establish Bethlehem, decree
The Adoration of the Three,
Convert the straw to gold, the oat
To rubies, summon ass and goat,
And turn the powdered local air
To frankincense and fervent myrrh!

So always what you saw became
Translated from the wick to flame:
Through the dark crystal of your eye,
Curved by the soul's intensity,
Life and Love and Death would pass
In points of fire under glass:
The common agonies of life
Twisting like a casual knife
Into the heart, behind the brain;
The quick unstudied cloud of pain;
The massive hush, the marble breath,
The curt omnipotence of death—
All these dilated to a dot,
Magnified to a fiery knot
Beneath the frugal frosty lens
Of your dispassionate double sense.

But always, but above all, that
Intolerable magnificat:
The awful unknown sacrament
Of love, the luminous event
Whiter than death, the cheated lip,
The thwarted womb, the steady drip
Of blood and tears from bitter wicks
Upon the mutual crucifix.
How different from our dreary fashion
Of playing little games with passion,
The flippant and ironic mode
Of using love as episode,
Of chinning to the fourteenth line
To make a trivial valentine.

Ah well, when spurts another spring
Of grass and when your linnets sing,
Or when upon the eastern slopes
Your lilies and your heliotropes
Lure you to elude your Warden
And wander wistfully your garden
Like Enna's lonely child, like her
Slipping your jealous Kidnapper
To greet your robins back again,
Your larkspur and your cyclamen,
Sweet william, pansy, pink and stock,
Your butterflies on every rock
Fugitively anchored to
A wharf of gold . . . O brief and blue
And bittersweet the summer goes,
Even your loyal pines, your crows,
With the immemorial rose.
And your autumnal hornet staggers
Drunk with drenched pears ; golden daggers
Of corn stand stacked ; the muffled sheep
In sun-dust, pink and silver, sleep.
And then the Cattle Show that starts
With fakirs' tents and peddler's carts
That hurt so strangely. Then the snow
That follows on the Cattle Show,
Shutting you in, until there gleams
Your blue peninsula of dreams. . . .
And then the liquid spring once more
Rapping diamonds at your door—
And you so white, so small beside
The early blossoms like a bride :
The flowers lighted at your bed ;

Your eyes, your mouth so quieted;
The brave thin hands like glass that wrote
Poems coloured like Joseph's Coat. . . .

No more, Emily: set the match
To me with your precise dispatch,
And smile my words out and redress
By your remote abstemiousness
The too inquisitive step, the bell
That blunders in your citadel.

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I N D E X

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